Soviet Literature

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BORIS GORBATOV

A CHILD IS BORN ON CUCUMBER LAND

A misfortune had occurred on Cucumber Land.

Cucumber Land is a distant, lonely island in the Polar Sea—but you will never find it under that name in the atlas, search as you may. On the maps this tiny speck has its own name, a musical one, even poetic. But the Polar radio operators stick to the nickname Cucumber Land, and what can you do with them! That's the kind of people they are! Always with a laugh and a joke. Is it because they're bored in their little cabins, or what?

As a matter of fact, that queer name has a history attached to it. The island was discovered quite recently, and the head of the party feverishly measuring the newly-discovered land (the ice pressing on the ice breaker from all sides was an urgent inducement to speed) immediately made out a report, which included the words: "The newly-discovered land is shaped like a cucumber." And the radio operators, through whose hands everything passes, promptly dubbed this new member of the family of Polar islands—Cucumber Land.

The island soon acquired considerable importance—it was so distant! Explorers rubbed their hands—"Now we'll get a bit closer to all the secrets of the Polar Sea." Synopticians sighed in satisfaction—another stove for the wind and weather kitchen. Young Polar workers dreamed of Cucumber Land as though it were some sweet young bride. They mused over its beauties and there were no feats they would not have attempted to win it. "What's Dixon, Tixie, Chelyuskin?" they said scornfully. "They're ours already. Like being at home. But there . . ." And in a thrilled whisper they would add: "Just think—78°. No joke, that. . . ."

So the cucumber-shaped island became inhabited. Beside the large, round, cup-like imprints of bear's paws, the virgin snow bore the sharp, determined tracks of Man.

Buildings rose. Laughter rang out among the splintered ice boulders, men's and women's voices. People already led their ordinary every-day life, and coffee boiled in shining brass pots; they had their pleasures, their evenings over the chessboard; they had their cares, their excitements. . . And now they had a misfortune. Or better call it good fortune. Yes, of course, good fortune! . . Though for that matter nobody could say as yet how it would turn out. The fact was, that a woman was screaming—terrible, inhuman screams; a stout man was standing over her, pale as death, his shaking hands moving helplessly, while heavy, round beads of sweat rolled down his face.

Now it would be a great mistake to think that in the Soviet Arctic people live on their distant islands, knowing nothing of their nearest neighbours. True, it is often a thousand kilometres from neighbour to neighbour, from island to island—and what kilometres! But then, there are the radio operators! And thanks to them, the whole Arctic knew that on distant Cucumber Land a woman was lying in agony, giving birth to a new citizen. And the whole Arctic held its breath, waiting for the birth, just as though all of them, these grim, courageous people—miners of Nordvik, scientists on Chelyuskin, radio operators on Dixon Island, builders at Tixie Port, wintering parties on Bely—all were standing by the mother's bed, trying not to move, not to cough, waiting for the appearance of this tiny new citizen of the world, waiting to hear his first challenging cry, to meet him with a tender, paternal smile.

"Well, how's it going? How's it going?" came the question morning, noon and night from all the wintering parties and settlements.

But the woman continued to scream, and it seemed as though her groans rang through the whole Arctic, while her husband—helpless, as husbands always are in such cases—stood over her weeping, and the doctor, unable to help, fussed nervously over her. He was not a gynecologist, poor fellow, and the case was a particularly complicated one—the foetus was lying horizontally.

That day a frantic radiogram reached the radio centre.

"Help! Help!" implored the woman's husband. "Do something stop save mother comma child."

But what could be done? The operator who received the message frowned painfully, took off his headphones and went to the chief. What was to be done? After all, it was a woman . . . a child. . . .

The chief and the Communist Party organ-

izer racked their brains. How to help the woman? Nobody could fly there—there was not a single aircraft in the settlement. Winter. Polar night. How could anybody get there? The Party organizer frowned and went to the doctor at the hospital.

This doctor's name was Sergei Matveyevich. What is there to say about him? He was just an ordinary doctor, like thousands of others, one of those old hospital doctors whom nothing can startle, take aback or frighten. He will stolidly take your pulse, just as stolidly shake his head, and if he has to carve you up, he will crack his old-fashioned jokes as though this were no operation at all, but a pleasant talk over a cup of tea. And he was just as ordinary to look at—a portly figure, large, red hands—real surgeon's hands; a thick, kindly voice; a neat bald patch, covered with thin strands of hair; glasses in a black case, clothing and hands smelling of carbolic, medicine, the hospital—in a word, the typical family doctor. So much so, that if you met Sergei Matveyevich among the other Northern Sea Route officers, wearing his uniform with the anchor on the sleeve, you would involuntarily wonder: "What's happened? Where's his smock?"

There was only one extraordinary thing about this doctor: he was too . . . ordinary for an Arctic doctor. After all, look at it as you will, Arctic doctors are romantic figures. You only have to glance at the map. You'll find the names of many doctors among those Polar explorers whose memory the atlas preserves. Take Starokadomsky Island, Cape Isachenko. On Dixon Island you will be shown the grave of the doctor's assistant Vladimirov, a modest hero of the north, and remove your hat respectfully before the monument in the form of a grey fin. On Wrangel Island you yourself will begin by seeking the grave of Dr. Wulfson, a hero who gave his life fighting the enemies of the people in the Arctic.

But Sergei Matveyevich was almost offensively free from anything romantic. Just an ordinary, prosaic doctor. He had not the least resemblance to those gallant ship's doctors, accustomed to ice, storms, heaving decks, to tinned rations and the smell of salt water.

But perhaps he was a scientist interested in research?

Medical scientists have been eagerly volunteering for the north recently. They are biologists, and something of zoologists and botanists. Some collect shellfish and strange amphibious lizards, and bring these trophies back to the mainland, preserved in alcohol; others mount dwarf willows in their herbariums—that willow the whole of which, from roots to "crown", can be held on the palm of the hand; yet others study disease in Arctic conditions, people's behaviour, their mentality, possibilities of infection, and the influence of the Polar day and the Polar night on man. . . .

But Sergei Matveyevich did not preserve shellfish in alcohol, never dried tundra moss and apparently never even entered "strange facts from medical practice" in his diary. True, he did attempt something of the kind, but there was no time. The sick. The work. The hospital. In a word, everything went to show that this man wintering in the north was not going to enrich science with any new discoveries.

While he was still on board ship, on his way to the Arctic, the young magnetologist Modorov, one of those selfless enthusiasts of science, whose ardour glows like a flame in wintering parties, came up to the doctor and said with a gay smile:

"I understand you all right. And I understand how you regard all of us, wintering in the north. As far as you're concerned, we're just rabbits. You're going to study us, eh? Feel our pulse before and after the all-hands-on-deck call, listen to our heartbeat during the Polar night and after it. And then, of course, write a fat scientific treatise? Eh? Isn't that right? Well, Doctor, I'm very glad to be your rabbit."

Sergei Matveyevich looked at him in some confusion, and answered something to the effect that—yes, of course, he'd got something of the sort in mind. But he snapped his fingers so irresolutely as he spoke, that neither Modorov nor any of the other "rabbits" asked Sergei Matveyevich anything more about his scientific work. It looked as though he had come with just the one idea—to heal people when they were sick, to assist at births, to pull out teeth and carve out appendices.

For all this he needed a hospital, for a doctor without a hospital—"that my dear lad, that's like Columbus without a ship." And he did not need just any kind of hospital, but one thoroughly well built and equipped, because whether you're in the Arctic or out of it, if a man falls ill he has to be treated properly. So when the barges were unloaded, he himself carried the cases of instruments and equipment up on his back, and if anybody tried to help him, he would shout angrily:

"Careful! Careful! Don't smash it! Don't shake it!"

He himself sawed and planed, made shelves and fussed around the carpenters; he himself painted the walls white and covered the floors with linoleum. People were few, and their hands were full. Alongside the hospital a central radio station was going up; explosions sounded from the port—a coal base was being built. That was in 1934—a historical year for the Arctic, when as though at the wave of a wand, buildings, ports, workshops, colonies, pits appeared on the empty Arctic shores among the diabase cliffs.

The hospital rose too. It was small, with only five beds, but that was quite sufficient. It had everything just like the real hospitals in which Sergei Matveyevich had grown grey and bald, and soon became permeated with the smell of iodine and carbolic. There were the same shining white walls, the same shining instruments gleaming in the sun, there were the same glass-fronted cupboards with labelled jars. And cleanliness. And quiet.

Patients appeared too—mainly women. They would come here on dog sleighs from the distant fishers' and trappers' cottages hundreds of kilometres away, they would come beforehand to wait a month or two till "the time", living in the winter settlement.

fussed over and cared for by the women in the wintering parties, who could not be indifferent to such a thing as a birth. Men came too—with rupture, appendicitis, frozen fingers, injuries, toothache. He treated teeth and even filled them, and many who had not found the time to look after their teeth on the mainland now went to Sergei Matveyevich. But usually he said:

"Eh, dear fellow, what do you want to keep that rotten tooth for? Let's just get rid of it."

He would give his patients thirty grams of alcohol before pulling his tooth—to keep up their courage. Such was the tradition. But later on Sergei Matveyevich found that they were beginning to trick him. They would toss off the alcohol, but refuse to have the tooth pulled. "You know, Doctor," they would say, "that tooth's got better. Let's leave it in for a while." So then he gave his patients the alcohol only after pulling the tooth.

Being a surgeon, both by profession and inclination, he always preferred surgical measures and his patients used to laugh at him, saying that he even brightened visibly if he had to "carve somebody up."

"Now we'll just make a tiny little slit here, my dear lad, and you'll be easier. See, there you are! There's the slit and there's your sore."

He regarded internal complaints with some contempt.

"All that therapy—aristocratic ailments! What do you want an ailment like that for? Let's get rid of it. Such rubbish. . ." And then consolingly: "Leave it to nature. . . Nature knows best. It'll go away by itself. . . The climate here's splendid. . . A really healthy climate!"

It had already become a custom at dinner time for somebody to call across the table:

"Doctor, I've got a headache. Will it go away by itself?"

"Certainly, it'll go away, lad," he would answer with conviction.

Such was Sergei Matveyevich, our ordinary doctor. And if there was anything incomprehensible about him, it was his reason for coming to the Arctic.

Actually, he had seen nothing of the Arctic. All he ever saw was the hospital, the group of officers, the flats in the winter settlement, and the hospital again. . . He always intended to go hunting, but never got down to it. He considered going round the distant trappers' cottages, but there was nobody to leave with the patients—all obstetric cases (it was amazing how many births there were in the Arctic), so he sent his assistant instead. Only once, in the autumn when the white dolphins were running, he joined the young folks hunting them; but he got in everybody's way, soaked himself to the skin, nearly lost the net, and finally, wet through but thoroughly happy, went ashore. Later, when the white dolphins had been hauled in, the doctor, surrounded by almost the whole of the wintering station, began dividing the sea animal with a knife. ("Looking to see if dolphins have appendicitis," laughed the young folks.) With experienced hands he opened up the beast and showed the others the lungs and stomach: "You know, they're very like human organs."

People listened to him with attentive interest, although he was amazingly bad at expressing himself, and if he tried to make a speech he invariably stumbled, became confused and lost the thread.

One day after evening coffee, when the atmosphere in the officers' mess was particularly warm and cosy, the magnetologist Modorov sat down beside the doctor.

"Don't be offended, Sergei Matveyevich. . . But tell me, just why did you come to the Arctic?"

Sergei Matveyevich looked embarrassed and spread out his hands.

"Well, how can I put it, lad," he mumbled. "Everyone round about kept talking about the Arctic, the Arctic. . . And I just thought, well, what about me. After all, I'm not so old." He twisted his moustache with a certain swagger. "And then a doctor came to our hospital. He'd just come back from the north. Keen as mustard, he was. Said there was such a big field. Interesting cases. . . .

"Why not go there? I was at the front too. . . I've seen plenty of everything. . . And then," he raised his honest blue eyes to his companion's face and continued simply: "And then—it's very well paid. Spend two winters and you get quite a capital, lad. I'd like to buy myself a cottage near Moscow. You know. . . with a garden. A hammock. Flowerbeds. . . I love nasturtiums. And then . . . night-scented stocks under the windows. . . ."

After this conversation everybody found the doctor still more dull and prosaic.

But as ordinary and prosaic, as he was, with his large red hands, a portly figure under his overall, smelling of carbolic and iodine—nevertheless, he was the only person at the winter settlement who could help the woman giving birth on Cucumber Land, although it was anything but clear how he was to do it.

Uncle Vassya, the Communist Party organizer, came to the hospital and closeted himself with the doctor in his surgery.

"Got to help her," he said, raising weary eyes to the doctor's face.

"But hold on a bit, hold on, lad," rumbled Sergei Matveyevich in surprise. "You say, got to help. All right, get your patient here. And I'll look after her with pleasure. But I can't assist a birth which . . . well, which is . . . er . . . somewhere in space."

"But you've got to help, Doctor," the Party organizer repeated insistently.

"Now that's a good one!" laughed the doctor and even clapped his hands together. "Give me some arms a thousand kilometres long, and then I'll be able to reach . . . er . . . to the patient's bed. Give me telescope eyes, lad, to . . . see over a thousand kilometres, and then I'm willing, I'm willing."

"We'll give you arms and eyes like that, Doctor," said the Party organizer. "And then. . . ."

"But I don't understand, lad. . . What arms? What eyes?"

"Radio. They'll tell you the patient's condition, and the . . . what's it, the position of the foetus, and you, well, you'll take charge."

Dumbfounded, Sergei Matveyevich stared silently at the Party organizer for a long time.

"Do you really mean it, are you serious?" he whispered at last.

"Absolutely. There's no other way out."

Sergei Matveyevich put on his overall and marched resolutely to the door.

"Let's go to the patient," he said. Then he halted. "But why have I put on my overall? Well, it doesn't matter. Dear, dear, funny things happen in this world, lad. The first incident in all my experience of a . . . er . . . maternity case *in absentia*. Delivery by radio. I can just see how startled my colleagues will be. . . Well, never mind. Come along."

The operator called Cucumber Land. He announced to all the Polar stations: "In view of the central station being continually occupied with Cucumber Land, work with other stations is suspended until—until after the confinement."

All stations fell silent. The ether was still. The Arctic, holding its breath, followed the course of the birth on distant Cucumber Land. Sergei Matveyevich went up to the operator.

"Well, now," he began, hooking his hands in his overall belt, and then broke off, lost.

Habit is strong—he had nearly asked: "Well, now, and how are we?" but suddenly remembered that there was no patient in front of him. Emptiness. Ether. In a manner of speaking . . . er . . . just space.

He was like a fish out of water. There were none of the usual surroundings to give him the needed calm. He ought to see the patient, hear her groans, her prayers, sense her agonies, see blood in the bowl, feel the child with his hands—that small, slippery, helpless little body.

But there was nothing of all this. And he felt like an old soldier who faces bullets calmly but fears the threatening evil silence of an ambush; like a miller who can sleep peacefully to the clatter of the stones, but is awakened by silence.

Here, in the radio station, he was like a walrus ashore. The lamps burned steadily. Something crackled in the loudspeaker. Silence. No patient, no groans, no agonies.

No agonies? But she was in agony over there . . . in space. In the direst torment . . . and waiting for help. And everybody round about was waiting. Well, Doctor, Sergei Matveyevich, what about it?

He bent over the operator and said:

"Er . . . lad . . . the doctor's speaking . . . what is the position of the child?"

He watched curiously while his words, like peas, spilled into dots and dashes and flew through the ether. In a minute or two the reply came.

Sergei Matveyevich read it and frowned. And this was the beginning of this unusual "maternity case *in absentia*."

"The child is lying horizontally," the doctor thought aloud. "M'yes. . . A difficult case! Ask my colleague," he turned to the operator, "does he know, has he even heard how to turn the child by the Braxton-Hickston method."

"Eh, how can he know that? A young fellow like that. And a therapeutist into the bargain," he thought to himself.

A therapeutist! Like all surgeons, he regarded them with slight mistrust.

The reply came, the one which Sergei Matveyevich had expected. "I've heard of it, but I want you to direct me in everything, every detail."

"Wash your hands in alcohol and iodine. Smear every finger with iodine. Wash them for ten minutes, lad," the doctor dictated, and the operator, in blind obedience, like an acolyte, tapped out everything, even including the word "lad". How could he know, maybe even that word had some medical significance.

The Cucumber Land doctor reported obediently that his hands were washed.

"Right!" The doctor nodded, satisfied. "Now asepsis for the woman." He wrote down the instructions in detail and handed the paper to the operator. And again he watched curiously, wonderingly, while his words, thoughts, all that which a moment ago had only been in his brain, was now being carried a thousand kilometres with miraculous speed. And for the first time he looked with deep respect at the operator.

The latter, feeling the importance of this case, was tense as a coiled spring, he was even crimson with concentration. He tapped out every letter distinctly, fearing to make a mistake. When he received the reply from Cucumber Land, he wrote it slowly, without any of the telegraph operator's feverish haste that was his boast. He even begged:

"Send it slower, if you get one letter wrong here, we may harm the mother and child."

"We-e-ll," said the doctor. "Now for an internal examination."

Now the decisive moment was coming.

"Eh, why, can't I be there?! After all, what's this. . . After all, I can't be responsible for what I can't even see."

While awaiting the reply, he walked agitatedly to the window and looked out into the street to calm himself. The street? But was there any street there? Snowdrifts piled up under the window. Further, the sheds, the bay, and still further—snow, snow, only snow. Snow on the storehouse roofs, snow in the bay, snow on the tundra. Greenish. On account of the moonlight?

"Eh, it's a long way you've come, Sergei Matveyevich!" he thought suddenly, and was surprised to feel how far he had travelled, just as though it were the first time it had ever occurred to him, as though this were not his second winter here, but only the first day.

"Sergei Matveyevich!" somebody whispered.

He glanced round. Two women were standing in front of him—the radio operator's wife and the geophysicist's wife.

"Sergei Matveyevich, dear Sergei Matveyevich, how's it going?" asked the bolder of the two, the radio operator's wife, agitatedly.

"What's that, how's it going?" asked the doctor angrily. "Ask your husband, Maria Ilyinishna. He's the one that's the radio magician. He knows better than me. I can't see. . . I can't see anything. . . Only snow."

"We only wanted . . ." began the geophysicist's wife shyly. "You see, I had a friend.

She was confined too, it was just the same thing. I know all the details. . . Perhaps it might help you? I can tell you."

"Oh. . . My dear good woman," the doctor frowned. "What's it got to do with you? It's not your friend being confined now. What do you want?"

"How do you mean?" asked the woman in surprise. "You ought to be ashamed, Sergei Matveyevich."

But at that moment the operator brought the reply from Cucumber Land. Whether it was good or bad, he did not know. He understood nothing of the medical terminology, but he was already alarmed, as though he felt that it was bad.

"Aha!" The doctor read the message and smiled. "Well, what about it, friend? We'll be able to turn it by the Braxton-Hickston method."

He went up to the transmitter. A stool was hastily thrust forward for him. Somehow, everybody knew that at last the decisive moment had come. The operator paled. The Party organizer wheezed: "Silence!" although there was already deep silence, perfect silence in the room crowded with so many people. All were motionless. All eyes were fixed on the doctor hopefully, agitatedly, uneasily.

A thought flashed into his mind: "Where have I found the courage? And such power. I shall speak the words here, and he'll carry them out there. . . And perhaps everything will go all right. And it'll be I. . . I. . ." And he began to describe the method in detail.

The key tapped, dots and dashes spattered through the ether, and now no outside thought could enter the doctor's mind. He could see the patient in his mind's eye. He could hear the groans. He could feel the softness of the child's leg, so helpless, so. . . .

"Don't make any mistake!" he cried (the operator tapped obediently). "Don't confuse the arm with the leg. Find the heel. The heel, lad. And make sure of it. Or you may pull the arm. That happens."

On Cucumber Land a group of agitated people had also gathered round the operator. The woman's husband, dishevelled, bathed in sweat, dashed from the radio station to the bed and back again. He gave the doctor's radiograms, heard the reply and ran back to the station, whispering the doctor's words as he went for fear of forgetting or confusing them.

The doctor was agitated, but Sergei Matveyevich's support gave him courage. He could see the woman's tear-filled agonized eyes fixed on him.

"It's all right, it's all right," he mumbled. "Sergei Matveyevich and I'll pull you through. . . . It's all right. . . Here's the heel. . . How soft it is. . . ."

"Got the leg," said the next radiogram which Sergei Matveyevich received.

"Aha," he said. "Got the leg. Good lad!"

A faint, glad whisper passed through the room: "Got the leg. Got the leg." People moved, smiled, prepared to rejoice. But Sergei Matveyevich was frowning again, and silence fell.

"We-e-ll," he said, "Now turn it by the leg, and with the outside hand. . . ."

He had forgotten all about the space. It was as though he were standing by the patient's bed and jerking out instructions to his assistant. "He's a good lad, a good lad!" he was thinking about the assistant. "Even though he is a therapeutist, he'll go far. Good lad." And already his assurance was growing that everything would be all right. He even felt as though from the very beginning he had been confident of a successful outcome. His professional calm had come at last. He was in his element.

Minutes passed, minutes that seemed like eternities. Sergei Matveyevich had now been sitting by the apparatus for an hour.

"Have I thought of everything? What unexpected complications can arise? Will the therapeutist manage? Eh, why can't I be there. Have I asked everything?"

His eyes were fixed on the receiver, as though he could get an answer from it. But he heard nothing but dots and dashes, dots and dashes—all Greek to him. He glanced at the form over the operator's shoulder, following the letters traced by the pencil.

"Turn ac-com-plished sat-is. . . ."

"Satisfactorily!" he cried, without waiting for the operator.

"Satisfactorily! Satisfactorily!" The word fled round the room. "Doctor! Sergei Matveyevich!"

"Watch the child's heartbeat!" the doctor cried angrily.

He was angry with himself for rejoicing at the radiogram like a first year student, like a freshman at his first operation.

"Disgraceful, disgraceful, Doctor! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

"Watch the child's heartbeat!" he cried to the operator again, and the latter started and began obediently tapping.

"Not yet delivered. H'm. Too much of a hurry, too much of a hurry," said Sergei Matveyevich reprovingly, turning to the people. And again silence reigned in the room: "Too much of a hurry," he growled softly and stared at the receiver.

Suddenly he realized how much he wanted that child to be born alive, wanted it desperately, almost frantically. Alive, alive—and a boy! Curly-headed. . . He dreamed of it, as though he were the father. . . The woman was saved, but the child, the child. . . .

"Watch that young man's heartbeat. Watch the heart carefully!"

"The heartbeat's clear, distinct," he heard the operator say.

No, it was not the operator's words he heard. It was the beating heart still in the mother's womb. The heart of a human being that had not yet seen the light of day. But soon this human being would appear and yell joyfully, imperatively demanding his rights, the rights of a citizen of the world. What a heart he would have! The heart of a man who owed his very life to his country—to this radio operator, to this Party organizer with his pipe, to this therapeutist (a grand lad, a grand lad!) and. . . and. . . yes, and to him, Sergei Matveyevich. And he laughed. But it was not triumph, not pride nor yet satisfaction that sounded in that laugh. It

was something that he himself did not yet completely understand.

The pangs of childbirth began. Radiogram after radiogram now flew from Cucumber Land. The doctor made brief reports on the condition of the mother, of how the pains were going, while the husband added on his own account: "She's suffering terribly . . . oh, it's terrible! Her screams . . . not human. . . What must we do? What must we do, doctor? She's in agony! Do something! I can't stand those screams!"

It was as though here, by the radio receiver, the terrible, inhuman groans of the woman could be heard. Sergei Matveyevich looked round and saw the pale face of the Party organizer, his teeth clenched on the stem of his pipe.

"Well, what's the matter? What's the matter with you, lad? It's not your wife that's giving birth."

"That's true," replied the organizer with a feeble smile. "It's not mine. But both the woman and the child, well, how shall I put it—they're ours."

Sergei Matveyevich, taken aback, was angry with himself for his stupid question, for not understanding the organizer, and perhaps hurting his feelings. But there was no time to think about that, no time! Watch the heartbeat!

. . . Three hours had passed. Three hours since he had seated himself by the transmitter, and now he felt extraordinarily tired, washed out, as though all his strength had drained away. How soon would it end, how soon, this unprecedented delivery by radio?

Suddenly he heard a cry from the operator—a glad, wild cry, heard everybody moving, crowding round him.

"A son, a son!" cried the operator, waving the radiogram. "Look! A son!" He held the slip out to Sergei Matveyevich, and the latter read:

"Doctor, comrades, friends! I've got a son, a son, a boy. Thank you, thank you all for everything! Sergei Matveyevich! Thank you, thank you, you are a true friend. Thank you!"

Hands reached out to Sergei Matveyevich from all sides. Warm handclasps, friendly, excited. He was congratulated, admired, thanked. The Party organizer seemed as though he could never stop shaking his hand, smiling, babbling:

"Ah, Sergei Matveyevich! . . What a man you are! . . It's grand! . . Congratulations. . . You did the job like . . . like . . . like a real Bolshevik, Sergei Matveyevich! . . ."

He sat there, confused and softened; he looked about him and could not take it all in; read the radiogram and could not take that in; heard congratulations and could not take them in either. He was at a loss. A surgeon, and he lost his calm.

Suddenly he saw his whole life in a new, unexpected light, himself, and his profession, and his student dreams—all that he had done, was doing, and could still do.

Was it really he who just the previous evening had been dreaming of a peaceful old age, with a cottage—you know, lad—with nasturtiums and night-scented stock under the window.

Translated by Eve Manning

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CONSTANTINE PAUSTOVSKY

SUMMER IN VORONEZH

FROM THE DIARY

THE URCHINS

The forest preserve on the banks of the Usman River near Voronezh borders on the Don steppes. Inside among the gently soughing trees it is cool and pleasant, but as soon as you emerge from the woods the heat and dazzling sunlight hit you in the face and the spicy breath of mint greets your nostrils, and before you, reaching to the very ends of the earth, lies the steppe—as farflung and windswept as the sea.

You see the windmills waving their arms on the hilltops, and the kites, and the old estate gardens set at discreet distances from one another like little islands on the billowy steppe.

But first of all you see the sky, the high steppe sky with its heavy, bluish clouds. There are a great many of them but they almost never blot out the sun. Now and again their shadows float over the steppeland, float so slowly that you can walk for a long time in these shadows, not allowing them to overtake you, and protected from the blazing sun.

In the heart of the steppes, not far from the old linden grove, the little Kamenka River gleams at the bottom of a sloping ravine. It has all but dried up, but in the pools where the sun-warmed water is clear, water spiders dart to and fro and sleepy frogs sit on the banks panting in the dry heat.

The linden grove, covered with abandoned dugouts overgrown with wild raspberry bushes, can be heard from afar. From dawn till dusk it is alive with the chirping, twittering and humming of a myriad of tomtits, goldfinches, robins, orioles and siskins. The chorus of the birds is never stilled in the branches of the lindens, which are so tall that looking at their tops makes your head spin.

Nestling in the shade of the trees is a small white house which once belonged to an all but forgotten writer named Ertel, a contemporary of Chekhov. It is a rest home now.

I had it in for the birds in this grove. Often in the early morning I would go down to the Kamenka to fish. The moment I entered the grove hundreds of birds would stir in the branches. Hiding themselves among the leaves, they would send showers of dew down upon my head, then, emerging with a loud whirr from the thickets, they would fly headlong into the interior of the park. It must have been a delightful spectacle but I was usually too dew-soaked to appreciate it. I tried walking noiselessly on tiptoe but that did not help. The more stealthily I approached some bird-filled bush the greater the uproar and the heavier the dousing with cold dew I received for my pains.

By the time I reached the river the sun would be up and the deserted, dew-laden steppe would be all agleam. There would not be a soul in sight. The most watchful eye would have failed to detect the slightest evidence of human presence. Yet no sooner had I cast my line than a host of small tow-headed, barefoot urchins would pop out of the ravine.

They would close in on me in a wide semicircle, but so cautiously that often I would be unaware of their approach until I heard them sniffing absorbedly at my back.

They would stand there sniffing in silent concentration and staring at the red floats. Now and again one of them would scratch one bare foot with the other.

From previous experience I knew that under such circumstances the fish stopped biting. Why, I cannot imagine, but so it is. It was enough for even one boy to stand behind me and stare at the bait for the fish to lose all interest.

At first I tried bribery. I handed each one of them a shiny hook on condition that they went away and let me fish in peace. They took the hooks, thanked me in whispers and dutifully withdrew. But half an hour later a crowd of altogether different youngsters would be there in their place.

"Uncle, give us a hook!"

I realized that I had made a grave mistake.

Racking my brains for some way of getting rid of the boys once and for all, I remembered something the writer Gaidar had told me. The best way to impress children, he had claimed, was to mystify them. And so the next time the small boys surrounded me and commenced to sniff and scare the fish away, I said in a gruff voice without turning round:

"I suppose you know that the fine is a hundred rubles?"

"What for?" the perkiest of them inquired uncertainly.

"You know for what!" I replied ominously.

The boys exchanged glances and without taking their eyes off me began slowly and cautiously to back away. They backed away for about thirty yards, then turned with one accord and scattered across the steppe. The smallest toddled along after them, stumbled and let out a deep howl. Whereupon the perky youngster seized him by the hand, gave him a sound thwack and pulled him after him. The boys disappeared.

No less surprised by what had happened than they were, I chuckled, only to hear

myself echoed by a giggle coming from behind a willow bush nearby.

I peered into the bush and beheld two more tow-headed lads lying face downwards in the grass, convulsed with laughter. They both had long rope whips by their side.

"So you two decided to stay?"

"We've got to," said the older lad. "We're cattleherds. The herd is beyond the hill. . . ."

"And if it wasn't?"

The boys grinned as they scrambled to their feet.

"No good," said the older one. "We wouldn't 'ave skedaddled anyway. We're big. They're just a lot of babies. They'd believe anything you tell them. You scared them good and proper, they won't come back so soon."

And that is how I made friends with Vitya and Fedya, the cattleherds. A rather curious conversation ensued.

"Are you a writer?" Fedya demanded peremptorily.

"I am."

"Been a writer long?"

"Long enough."

"Doesn't look like it," observed Fedya eyeing me with distrust.

"Why not?"

"The fish is biting and you don't seem to notice."

"I'm afraid you're confusing things," I said. "The fish has nothing to do with it."

"Come on," Fedya returned wisely. "It has."

At that point little Vitya intervened.

"Last summer," he began, speaking so rapidly that he had to gasp for breath, "there were two writers down here fishing. Uncle Georа and Uncle Sasha. Uncle Sasha would fling that line of his way out and before you knew it he'd be haulin' it in with a perch the length of your arm hangin' on to it! But Uncle Georа he couldn't do nothing. He'd just sit and sit all day long and the most he ever caught was a minnow—a teeny-weeny one!"

"You pipe down!" Fedya cut him short. "Nobody's asking you. Uncle Georа wasn't a writer, was he? See! But Uncle Sasha was. He's written twenty books."

At last I saw the light. In Fedya's eyes a real writer was a legendary being, endowed with every conceivable talent, a sort of magician who could do anything. Fedya's writer had to know everything, see everything, understand everything and be able to do everything perfectly. I did not want to dispel the illusion cherished by this little village cattleherd. Perhaps because I felt that behind this naive belief there lurked the real truth about genuine literary craftsmanship, a truth we do not always remember and to which we do not always aspire.

Somehow I felt ashamed of myself. And thenceforth I resolved that even in small things—like fishing, for example—I would make sure I did not miss a single bite, especially when Fedya was around. It became a point of honour with me. Here in Moscow now the whole thing sounds a trifle absurd, but at the time I could not bear the thought that Fedya might say to someone:

"Uncle Kostya? What sort of a writer is he? Why, he doesn't even know how to bait his line. The fish are always getting away from him."

After that I was more cautious in my dealings with Fedya. He had a consuming curiosity about everything. He asked me thousands of questions and I was not always able to answer them. Like all cattleherds Fedya knew all about herbs, flowers and plants and was fond of talking about them. I too knew something about plants, but here near Voronezh there grew many herbs and blossoms I had never come across in the northern parts of Russia. Hence I was rather glad that I had brought along with me from Moscow a manual on plants.

From my frequent rambles in the steppes and along the banks of the Usman I would bring back bunches of flowers and herbs and classify them. Gradually, thanks to Fedya, I became happily absorbed in a fascinating world of leaves, petals, corollae, stamens, a world filled with pure colour and the pungent odour of growing things. My room began to look like the den of a country witch doctor. Bunches of dry herbs hung from the walls, and the medicinal smell of prairie grasses entrenched itself so firmly that even the scent of the linden blossoms outside my window could not efface it.

And one day I had my hour of triumph.

Along the banks of the Kamenka grew the delicate blossoms of the knotweed. They looked like tiny white stars.

One morning at dawn I came down to the river's edge. Pretty soon Fedya arrived. He sat down beside me, pulled a bit of bread out of his pocket and while he chewed it began plying me with all sorts of questions.

The sky was still shrouded in darkness. The bright-coloured float stood motionless in the grey water. The fish were not biting.

I glanced at the knotweed blossoms at my feet and noticed that they were tightly closed.

"Aha, it's going to rain soon," I remarked to Fedya.

"How do you know?"

"I can tell by the flowers," and I pointed to the closed blossoms. Fedya wrinkled his forehead and sat quiet thinking this over.

"But why should they close before the rain?"

"So the rain won't knock off the pollen."

And I launched into a brief lecture on pollenization, adding that you could even tell the time by flowers. While I was talking I felt a roach biting at my line but I was too busy talking to pull him in and Fedya was so excited by what I was saying that he didn't even notice my negligence.

"How do you know all this?" he asked finally. "From school?"

"No, from books."

"Well, if I knew things like that . . ." Fedya began, then stopped.

"If you knew, then what? Would you stop herding the cows and go to Voronezh?"

"No fear," said Fedya. "I like it here fine. When I grow up I'm going to be the chairman of the collective farm instead of Silanty Petrovich, and I'll have hothouses and flowers. I'll introduce all sorts of new things. I'll start a honey factory. . . ."

A single drop of rain plopped into the water, sending slender ever-widening circles over the surface. Then suddenly everything about us stirred, the grass whispered, tiny circles formed on the surface of the water and a faint but distinct pattering filled the air. A warm gentle rain was falling.

Far away, behind a rent in the feathery clouds, the sun beamed forth in broad rays and the steppes steamed and glittered. The scent of grasses, grain and soil was wafted to our nostrils and the smell of fresh milk came from behind the knoll where the cows were grazing.

"Look at the flowers!" said Fedya excitedly. "They're just like glass."

Raindrops clung to the fuzzy stalks of the knotweed making them sparkle and glitter at our feet as if they were indeed made of crystal.

The pattering of the raindrops did not lessen and now it seemed to us that all these crystalline stalks added a faint tinkling note to the murmur of the shower.

There was nowhere to hide from the rain and so we sat where we were, with Fedya's padded jacket thrown over our heads for protection.

"A kindly summer!" Fedya remarked gravely.

He must have heard the expression from some of the old folk in the village, his grandfather perhaps. The summer was indeed full of an elusive kindliness; one felt it in the gentle patter of the rain, in the warmth of the rivers, in the faint nodding of the myriads of field flowers, and in the scent of the ripening corn—harbinger of the harvest to come.

ANNA

A hot dry wind had been blowing for more than a week. The mowers complained that the grass had shrivelled and become as coarse as wire, making it well nigh impossible for them to cut it without stopping every minute to sharpen their scythes.

What with the ringing sound of the scythes being sharpened, the hot breath of the wind, and the clouds of dust on the steppe roads the summer was a hard one indeed. The soil was cracked, the water in the pond had dried up, exposing the bottom dotted with the prints of calves' hooves. It was hard to believe that there were such things as rain and coolness anywhere on earth.

The mowers were cutting the grass on the grounds of the rest home. They worked hard, cropping it close around every bush as they went. But there was one small mound under an old linden they left untouched. It was left untouched because beneath this small mound, overgrown with yellowing grasses the girl Anna lay buried.

From the disjointed, rambling stories of the mowers one gathered that a hundred years ago a Voronezh tradesman named Ivan Savvich Nikitin had lived in these parts. He had kept an inn on the Zadonsky road and in his spare time he would pull out his office ledger and jot down a song or a verse he had composed. The mowers claimed that Ivan Savvich himself had sawn off the branch on which Anna had hanged herself and had painted the gash over with white paint. And though almost a century had passed you could still see the white spot on the tree where the branch had been.

Anna had been a serf actress in the landowner's private theatre. The landowner was a German named Schlichting who kept a stable of famous horses, black and glossy—"like swallows," the mowers said—and Ivan Savvich supplied the oats to feed them.

One day Ivan Savvich came to Schlichting to collect some money owed him for the oats. Schlichting's private troupe was giving a performance and Ivan Savvich saw Anna on the stage. What he said to her no one knows. But afterwards he went to Schlichting and asked him to let Anna go to Moscow to act in a professional theatre. She had great talent, he said.

He used all his powers of persuasion, appealed to the landowner's better nature, called on God as his witness. He even went so far as to agree to cancel the debt Schlichting owed him for oats, a solid debt of many years' standing, and promised the landowner the profound gratitude of the people. But Schlichting was a lean and high-handed German, in spite of his jovial manner and the way he pranced about his estate.

He waved Ivan Savvich to an armchair, took a seat opposite him, pressing hard against his knees and gazing softly into his eyes, he said:

"You are mistaken if you think I am so hard up that I would exchange Anna for a few bags of oats. Here, take your money and go your way. I don't need your oats any more."

He opened a drawer of his desk—a handsome affair of inlaid mother-o'-pearl—and took out a wad of banknotes. "I've sold all my horses and the estate too, and I'm going to sell Anna to Prince Orlov—he has a weakness for wenches like her. As for me, I'm going to settle in Riga. So I'm afraid you're too late with your petition. In any case you would have failed because if my affairs were in better shape I would never let Anna go. What's mine is mine, and what's yours is yours. So don't go poking your nose into my affairs!" Ivan Savvich rose and said: "I see that you have neither honour nor generosity. You're just a dirty German cur!" And he hurried out for fear he might murder Schlichting on the spot. And Anna hanged herself that same night on the linden tree.

The mowers were resting on the earthern wall that encircled the rest home grounds, letting the stiff breeze from the steppes dry their perspiring brows and their sweat-soaked shirts.

For a while they sat silent, watching through narrowed eyelids the way the wind sent broad waves coursing through the oat fields. After they had rested a bit, they lit cigarettes and old Semyon, the night watchman at the rest home—a timid old chap with a yellow, wizened face—broke the silence.

"My girl's name is Anna too. But times have changed!"

"Eh, what's that?" one of the mowers asked. Though they had heard Semyon's stor-

ies about Anna, the serf actress, and Anna, his daughter, many a time, they never stopped him, either from laziness or because of their peasant love of a long, well-told tale.

"Times have changed, I say," repeated Semyon. "It's a better life we're living now. Now, just listen to this. . . ."

And Semyon began his story. The mowers listened, scratching their chests and interpolating a word of approval now and then. Yes, old Semyon might not have any sons, but fate had not been unkind to him, for that daughter of his was a fine lass. She was indeed.

When Semyon had finished, one of the mowers was bound to ask:

"So you say she's coming to see you soon?"

"Aye, she is that," Semyon would reply hastily with a sheepish smile. "She wrote and said she'd be coming after St. Peter's day. I only hope I last that long."

"Oh, you'll last all right," the mowers assured him lazily.

"I've got to," Semyon would mutter. "But I don't seem to have much breath left in me."

And indeed as he bent down to tie up his bast shoe his breath came in short, wheezy gasps. The mowers would exchange glances in silence, and then someone would say brightly:

"Time we got back to work. Got to finish by St. Peter's day."

During the war the rest home had been closed. The place stood silent and empty and the grounds were deserted. The paths were overgrown with weeds and swarms of red beetles with black spots on them basked unhindered in the sunshine. "Little soldiers," the villagers called them. Dust gathered on the bookshelves, the curtains and the old furniture. Bouquets of flowers, forgotten by visitors, stood withered in the vases and the faint decayed odour of stagnant water, in which the flowers had stood too long, hung in the rooms.

Semyon could not get accustomed to the emptiness. Every night he wandered about the grounds with his old shotgun as he had done before the war, muttering to himself, in surprise to find that the urchins no longer shook the cherry trees in the garden; with his head thrown back he would stand staring up at the sky, listening for the sound of some invisible aeroplane and try to guess whether it was ours or the enemy's.

Semyon lived with his daughter Annushka in the village of Privalovo, three kilometres from the rest home, and he came here to take up his watchman's duty only toward evening. The rest of the day the house and the grounds stood forgotten and deserted.

After a while the rumble of the guns could be heard from the park and the house was taken over by new occupants—the army. Hot, dusty tanks crawled over the grounds and took shelter under the spreading branches of maples and lime trees. The soldiers dug trenches and dugouts. They dug them in the farthest and most picturesque corners of the park in the heart of the thickets. Perhaps they believed that hidden among the trees and bushes they would be safer. That was absurd, of course, but the dense foliage overhead and the branches of the wild raspberries that hid the entrances to the dugouts gladdened the hearts of the fighting men and soothed them.

Just before the war Annushka had finished secondary school and had begun to work at the beaver preserve in the forest on the other side of the Usman River. When the Germans advanced the beavers were released from captivity and allowed to return to the river. But one old beaver refused to leave, and so when the staff of the preserve left, Annushka was entrusted with the job of feeding him. Every day she would walk from Privalovo to the preserve, cutting ash branches and picking nettles for the old beaver on the way. And each time he saw her the beaver would stand up on his hind legs and begin shaking the wire mesh of his cage with joy at the sight of a human being.

There was much work to be done on the collective farm, the farmers worked from dawn till dusk, but Annushka never let a day pass without going to feed her beaver. Every evening as she walked to the preserve through the damp, still woods and over the Usman River it seemed to her that she was crossing uninhabited territory. The only sound was the low rumble of the guns from somewhere near Voronezh. And the knowledge that the war was being fought close by, that the enemy stood on the very threshold of her home, made the fields and meadows she had known from childhood seem lovelier and dearer than ever. And perhaps because she felt that she would soon be bidding farewell to all these familiar things, Annushka nodded a greeting as she passed a lark's nest—the foolish bird had built it right in a roadside ditch—the blossoms of wild hollyhocks growing by a tree stump on the slope, or a clump of young birches, their bark still warm from the sun, or a crumpled hair ribbon some schoolgirl had dropped.

As winter approached a hospital was opened in the Privalovo school building and Annushka went to work there. She was worried about her old beaver, but Semyon prepared a good stock of ash logs for him and the beaver reluctantly consented to hibernate, so that it was no longer necessary to visit him every day.

One day a troupe of actors came to the hospital from Moscow to entertain the wounded soldiers. After the concert, at the request of the patients, Annushka sang a few songs too. When she had finished, a tall, white-haired actress in a quilted jacket, kissed her warmly and told her that she had a beautiful voice. Annushka was so embarrassed she could not raise her eyes. But the wounded men applauded wildly and shouted "encore!"

The tall actress went home with Annushka and spoke to Semyon, begging him to let Annushka go with her to Moscow to study for the stage. Semyon did not know what to say, he wasn't quite sure what it was all about and he kept repeating:

"You city folk know best. I'm not the one to stand in the way of Annushka's happiness."

When the actress had left, Semyon sat for a long while on the bench pulling the wad-

ding out of his old shabby fur cap. Annushka stood white-faced against the wall, her heart throbbing wildly and the tears streaming down her face. She could not check their flow. She stared at Semyon's grey hair, at his scraggly neck with the old green muffler at his throat, and wept bitterly out of pity and also because she could not decide what to do.

"Martha, your mother, died," Semyon said at length. "She was never strong. And you're not so strong either. You're like a blade of grass. It'll be too hard for you. Life in Moscow is a whirligig."

"As you wish, papa," Annushka replied in a whisper.

"My wish is simple," replied Semyon. "What is good for you is all right with me. You'd better go, I suppose. I'll manage here somehow by myself. Like that old beaver of yours."

He rose and went out of the cottage. Annushka rushed after him. The night was dark and bitterly cold. A low, treacherous wind swept across the steppes. Semyon paused in the doorway.

"Don't follow me," he said.

Annushka went back into the cottage and sat down on the bench to wait for his return. But Semyon did not come back for a long time. When at last he came he was covered with snow, and looked subdued and aged. He stroked Annushka's head awkwardly and said:

"Go. I have done my share of work on this earth. My years are numbered. Only see you don't get into trouble there . . . don't forget. . . ."

Annushka seized the old grey head and pressed her lips to the shaggy, snow-flocked hair.

Two days later she left with the actors, and soon afterwards our troops bore down on the Germans with crushing force and drove them westward.

The snows melted, the winter grain sprouted as sturdy as bristles. May came cool and bright. And one day when the sky was still clear and green came the glad tidings that we had won, and the war was over.

A year passed and still Annushka did not come. The rest home reopened and Semyon stood watch over the grounds as before and went about telling the visitors the story of the serf girl Anna and Ivan Savvich the rhymester. But about his own Annushka he never said a word, for he was afraid that they might think him an idle old chatterer and might even smile at the idea of a Moscow actress having such a humble father. You never knew what to expect from those rest home folk. All sorts came here. But Semyon did not say much about it to the villagers either, for they knew that his Annushka was in Moscow studying in a good theatre.

One day the director of the rest home called Semyon in and asked him not to tell the visitors the story of Anna the serf.

"Why not?" demanded the old man, hurt. "I'm not telling any lies, am I? It's a true story, everybody around here knows it."

"There's no need to wag your tongue unnecessarily," said the director sternly. "Folks are nervous and highly strung nowadays. When they hear such stories by day they're afraid to walk past the old linden at night. Perhaps we ought to chop it down?"

"Nay, that would be a sin," said Semyon. "I'd better hold my peace."

And so it came about that the old man could not talk to anyone. June ended and the summer began to wane, and still Annushka did not come. The hot dry winds blew from the steppe unceasingly, making breathing difficult. At night flashes of lightning lit up the steppe and the grain growing on the slopes of the hills.

One day Semyon asked the director for time off to go to a town some miles away to send a telegram to his daughter. He set out at twilight when the heat was less intense, for by day it was impossible to make a long journey on foot. Nevertheless the old man made his way with difficulty. He plodded along, stopping frequently to rest by the wayside and catch his breath while he rubbed the dusty wormwood between his fingers and sniffed at it, for it seemed to help his breathing. For a long while he sat watching the bluish haze of evening enfold the steppe and the flush of sunset gild the tips of the clouds that looked like great snow mountains and islands as they hung silently over the rich, grain-laden, sun-baked earth awaiting the cool of the night.

"What is there behind those clouds?" Semyon wondered. "Could it be paradise? But perhaps all this earth of ours, this rolling steppe, is paradise?"

The air was filled with the whirring of birds on the wing. The grey windmill on the hillside shone like burnished gold.

"Eh, Annushka," murmured Semyon as he rose painfully to his feet. "You ought to be here to see this; after all you were born here, you ran barefoot over the whole steppe. And now where are you? I shall neither see you nor hear you."

The windmill stood off the road. On its step sat a man in a soldier's tunic with a crutch under his arm. "Must be the new miller," thought Semyon and walked over. He wanted to have a smoke with the new man, to sit for a while and chat about his affairs. His affairs . . . his sorrow, perhaps would be more correct, but Semyon recoiled mentally from the word. What sorrow indeed, with his daughter in Moscow studying; and if she hadn't come home yet, and hadn't written for a long while—what of it? Moscow was a great city and the work there was not the simple toil of peasant folk. There no doubt they worked the clock around and had no time for sleep. And how else could you expect to run a country the size of this, with thousands and thousands of miles of grain fields, forests and steppes.

The man at the mill was smoking home-grown tobacco. The blue wisp of smoke from his cigarette rose straight upwards under the arm of the mill. "A good omen," thought Semyon as he greeted the stranger and sat down to roll himself a smoke, glancing at the new miller out of the corner of his eye. A good man, he seemed, and young—home from the war, no doubt.

"I'm off to send my daughter a telegram," said Semyon by way of breaking the ice.

"What's the trouble?" inquired the miller.

"You see, it's like this. . . ."

Semyon began slowly to tell his tale. The miller listened, puffing at his cigarette and smiling now and again. And Semyon went on talking. He did not tell the miller about what had happened to Annushka, instead he reminisced about the little girl with the light braids, as quiet and gentle as a moth. How light had been her step. Why, you could scarcely hear her as she walked. Folks used to call her a beauty. Perhaps they were right, but that didn't matter. What mattered was that she was a good, sweet child, industrious too, and a good daughter to her father. There were only the two of them but they could not have wished for a happier existence. He didn't know what she was like now.

"Why, you ought to be glad to have such a daughter," said the miller. "You'll just have to stop thinking about yourself and not take offence."

"I daresay you're right," said Semyon. "I can't make myself out sometimes. I am glad, very glad, but sometimes I can't help feeling sad and lonely. It'd be different if I had several daughters, but she's all I have in the world. And if she were disrespectful or scatterbrained, then it wouldn't matter so much. But she has a heart as warm as a flame. A pure heart. Well, I'll be getting along. Got to be back at work by morning."

Semyon took his leave of the miller and set off. It was growing dark and a delicate horn of a young moon hung over the distant copse. Beyond it, a dry mist was forming. Then it grew dark in the south, distant thunder grumbled some ominous words and a sinister glow spread over the skies. Semyon quickened his pace. But the faster he walked the more often he had to pause, gasping and coughing. And as he coughed a wave of heat suffused his head and made his eyes water.

And the sky grew darker as though a wall of lead were rising from under the ground and now the thunder boomed imperiously from all directions. The white dust, lit up by the moon, scurried across the steppe towards Semyon. "I'll never get there!" he thought. A loud rustling seized the grain and the grasses, the steppe seemed to shrink from the wrath of the skies and from a distant ravine came the plaintive neighing of a tethered horse.

Then came the blinding flashes, one after another. An icy wind swept down from the clouds and with a threatening noise the dark downpour battered the earth.

The following morning a truck picked up Semyon in the steppe, soaked through and in a high fever. The telegram was never sent.

The woman doctor from the rest home who examined Semyon shook her head. She came to Semyon's cottage twice a day but Semyon knew that her efforts were unavailing, for he would never recover. An old peasant woman who lived next door looked in now and again to do what she could for the old man. She made up a straw pallet for him on the porch when he found the interior of the cottage too hot and stuffy for comfort, and now he lay near the open door, covered with his sheepskin jacket, gazing out onto the road, waiting and refusing stubbornly to go back to his bed inside the hut.

The nights were easier than the days because then the headlights of the occasional cars were visible from a long distance: Annushka might be in any of these cars.

Like a white star against the background of the dark forest in the distance the light would appear. Slowly it would crawl forward, vanish from view behind the hill, then reappear, its silvery light accompanied now by the gentle hum of the engine. Semyon would stir and raise his head and the light would flash in his eyes, run swiftly over the porch, tremble a moment over the cottage walls and then pass on into the steppe beyond. And Semyon would lean back and close his eyes, listening to the voices of the night that are never stilled.

Far in the distance a locomotive whistled. "Maybe the train has just come in, a few hours late," thought Semyon and began figuring: now she was on the platform . . . now she was outside the station getting a lift on a truck going her way . . . now the truck had entered the woods . . . passed the parapet . . . crossed the bridge . . . skirted the edge of the preserve ("most likely the beaver is also lying there waiting," Semyon thought), now she had reached the village. Semyon groaned, lifted himself on his elbow and listened. But the steppe was silent, so silent that he thought he could hear the stars plopping into the pail of water that stood next to him with the wooden dipper floating on top. Presently a landrail croaked in a nearby ravine and with one accord all the roosters in the village began to crow, and then again all was silent.

To Semyon it seemed that Schlichting, the German, was sitting behind him sneering at him: "I don't need your oats, Semyon Yevseich."

"Your days have gone for ever," Semyon whispered in reply. "Your greedy claws have been clipped. We are our own bosses now, you old cur." Schlichting fell silent and vanished, and in his place stood a young girl from the rest home. Her name was Lolya, and wrinkling her forehead she gave Semyon some bitter water to drink and tried to coax him to go back inside the hut. And Semyon noticed with surprise that it was daylight already. A loud humming noise from behind the hill bothered him. "Could the combines be out already?" he thought. That meant that the harvesting had begun, and still she had not come.

"I've failed Annushka," he said to Lolya. "I promised to live until she came, but I'm afraid I shan't hold out much longer. I've only one-tenth of my breath left."

Semyon kept wanting to ask Lolya to send a telegram to Annushka but somehow he could not pluck up enough courage. One night he composed a message in his head: "Be always straight and true and don't

forget to visit my grave." But he did not think they would accept such a telegram. Those folks at the telegraph office were always in a hurry. They were forever transmitting long lists of figures. They hadn't time for a silly old duffer like him. Queer to think he had lived so many years in the world without learning to express his thoughts properly.

During the day Semyon had numerous visitors—the doctor, the director and the visitors from the rest home, and the old neighbour woman, but Semyon lay with his eyes closed pretending to be asleep, for he was too weak to talk. Moreover he felt ashamed before all these people. He had gone about telling everyone that he had a daughter in Moscow who loved him dearly and was assuredly coming to see him. And now she wasn't coming and folks were bound to be thinking that his daughter must be a bad, selfish creature and that he himself was just an old chatterbox.

The heat abated and the summer slowly turned to autumn. One night he heard the rain pattering on the leaves and on the roof of his cottage. The darkness outside was velvety and warm and out of the gloom came the smell of rain-beaten dust and nettles. Listening to the raindrops ringing against the broken iron pot in the yard where he had kept his chicken feed, Semyon smiled bitterly. He remembered how Martha had bought the pot in town and how pleased she had been with her purchase. And now it lay there of no use to anyone.

The rain cooled the air and made it easier to breathe, and Semyon fell into a doze. He never knew how long he had lain thus before he was roused suddenly by a bright, white light shining into his eyes. Outside the cottage a car stood panting. Semyon raised himself on a trembling elbow and cried out: "Annushka, is it you?" Then he fell back helpless, and Annushka, her eyes brimming with tears, seized his unkempt head and pressed her lips to it, stroked his bony shoulders and his bristly cheeks. Her hands smelt as fragrant as the grass at night.

"Why, Dad," she said, "What have you been doing to yourself?"

"Nothing," muttered Semyon, "It's nothing. I'm just a bit weak, that's all. Life without you isn't worth much, Annushka."

Someone lit a light in the cottage. People were talking and arguing about something, then they carried him inside and laid him on the bed, on which Annushka had spread a clean sheet. Then the people left. Annushka gave Semyon a cup of strong tea and sat beside him until morning, holding his hand and smiling through her tears.

Semyon could not take his eyes off her face. How beautiful she was, and what a grand dress she was wearing, the kind folks in the cities wore on holidays. But she was his girl, the Annushka he had remembered, the same, sweet girl with a heart as warm as a flame.

In September they buried Semyon beside the grave of the girl Anna. They covered the new grave with turf and field flowers, and autumn cast its leaves so thickly that the moist reddish clay was completely hidden. Semyon was laid to rest on his favourite spot under the lindens at Annushka's request. Every morning she came to his grave and when they saw her, the rest home people would lower their voices and steal past her quietly so as not to disturb her. And she would sit on the bench beside the grave looking out into the steppe and thinking. Birds winged their way southward through the clear cool autumn sky. The ripened seeds rattled in the withered pouches of fruits, and the wind scattered the yellow, transparent leaves over the ground. In the evenings layers of cold, blue clouds hung over the steppes.

Before her departure Annushka went to the preserve to visit her beaver. She walked along as she had done before, nodding gaily to her old friends, the birches, the river, the pines.

She found the old beaver in his cage. When she called to him he grunted, then recognizing her stood up on his hind legs and shook the wire netting.

Shortly afterwards Annushka left the village. The following summer when the mowers went to the rest home grounds again to cut the grass—this time without Semyon—they told the visitors two stories about the two Annas. One story was a very old one and perhaps less interesting, but the second one was fresh in everyone's memory. As told by the mowers it went something like this:

"She had only a little bundle with her when Semyon saw her off to the big city. All she had then was her voice. But a fine voice it was, pure and clear, it's a miracle such voices exist on earth. And she came back, famous and beautiful. Yes, Semyon was lucky to have such a lass. He waited and waited for her until he thought he'd surely never live to see her again, for he was sorely ill and could not be cured. And still she did not come. Of course the village women began whispering among themselves about the ingratitude of some daughters. Perhaps it served the old fool right, they said, for being so proud about that girl of his. And now she had turned out to be a selfish hussy. 'His bast shoes are not good enough for her any more,' they said. 'It's crêpe-de-chine and cocoa she'll be wanting nowadays.' Well, you know yourselves the evil tongues womenfolk have. If you shame them they'll keep quiet, but if you don't they'll wag their tongues and there's no stopping them. Well, finally she did come. And she brought Semyon a cottagefull of gifts. And although he didn't have long to live she made him comfortable, fixed up the cottage until it was as neat as a pin. The women, of course, stopped their carping and went to the other extreme, they simply couldn't admire Annushka enough. No sooner did she appear on the street than the women in all the cottages would start singing her praises. Queer creatures, women are! They even began to envy Semyon, poor old Semyon, who was going out like a light. Why, one puff of wind would have been enough to snuff him out. But he died happy sure enough. It's a funny

thing what happiness can do to a man. He actually began to move around a bit. It wasn't easy, of course, but somehow, with Annushka supporting him, he would take a little walk now and again. Well, the folks in the rest home found out who Annushka was and they came and asked her to do them the honour of singing for them some evening. Annushka was always an obliging soul and she agreed. That was a wonderful concert. We were all there, as guests. The whole village turned up. After all, Annushka wasn't only Semyon's daughter, she was our girl, from our village. The director sent a cart for Semyon. Ordinarily you'd never be able to get him to lend that cart for anything—a thrifty muzhik he is—but now look at him. He himself came to get Semyon. Well, there we were and the whole house blazed with lights and there were bouquets of autumn leaves all over the place. And all the rest home visitors were dressed up, the women in shining silk gowns and wonderful perfume. 'Your Annushka,' they said, 'is our pride!' Our Annushka, and to think that not long ago she was only a goose-girl, you might say. That's the kind of life we have nowadays! Not a life where chances are wasted! If you've got talent the road is open to you and that road doesn't lead to any Prince Orlov but out into the wide world. Well, Annushka came in with Semyon and what a reception she got! Fit for a princess, it was. Of course, there aren't any princesses nowadays, but for us she was a princess. And when she sang it made you tingle all over to hear her. And old Semyon sat there with the tears streaming down his face. 'This is a reward for my long life of hard toil,' he kept saying. Aye, it's a pity the old man couldn't have lived just a bit longer—he died a week after the concert. Passed away in his sleep. An easy death. The day we buried him was clear and quiet and so warm, the butterflies were darting about all over the meadows. And the sky was full of cobwebs as thick as yarn. Indian summer! The rivers and ponds were clear and blue and the air so pure it didn't seem to be there at all. And the park was like a great golden cathedral, filled with dry leaves and sunshine. Aye, an easy death Semyon had. Well, Annushka went away, and we wished her a happy life. We knew it couldn't be otherwise with her."

The reaper who had told the story fell silent. The others were silent too. And high up on the top of an old linden an oriole piped softly as if to say: "And it *will* be! It *will* be!"

Translated by Rose Prokofyeva

SERGEI KOLDUNOV

IN AMBUSH

Everything went splendidly.

They entered the fiord at night, and having reached their destination, submerged to await calmly the arrival of their prey. Morose, shaggy Zherebtsov, stooping over the hydrophone in the tiny acoustic cabin, listened tensely for the whisper of the sea to give due warning of the convoy's approach. The watch, headed by Kiselyov, stood at their posts, exchanging occasional remarks and glancing continually at the chronometer.

According to reconnaissance reports, the enemy could not be expected before three o'clock. It was now half past one.

Silence reigned in the large metal cigar lying on the floor of the inlet, a silence like that in the deep shaft of a mine. Although the men were accustomed to it, the heavy underwater silence seemed to press on their ears. The submarine commander Shatrov, in his cabin, had the same feeling.

Suddenly there was a knock at the cabin door and a moment later the familiar portly figure of Chief Engineer Milovidov appeared in the opening.

"What's the matter?" asked Shatrov coldly. "What's the reason for all this noise in a respectable family?"

Milovidov, his breath whistling as though he had just been running, made an irritated gesture.

"A bad business, Grigori Vassilievich! They've just reported that the steering drive in the ballast tank's damaged. We'll have to go out to sea to repair it."

Shatrov rose, and his bent finger tapped the table, as though to make his words more impressive.

"You're crazy, Nikolai Klementyevich! .. And what about the operation? .. Do you think the transports'll wait till we come back?"

Milovidov shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"Nothing to be done, Grigori Vassilievich! .. It's a trifle, but we have to do it. .. After all, we can't rise for repairs here, right under the enemy's nose. There must be a moon on top. The shore's six cable lengths away, and the place's alive with patrol boats."

"In other words, Comrade Engineer-captain, the whole operation's got to be struck out because of your steering drive! .. And all our preparations are for nothing?"

Milovidov preserved a gloomy silence. Tiny drops of sweat gleamed on his forehead. This was the first time that an operation had failed because of a mechanical defect.

"There was the storm," he said at last. "You know yourself what a battering it gave us on the way here."

All that was quite true. For a great part of the way the submarine had cruised on the surface through a heavy storm. That was enough to damage more than the steering drive. But the fact that it was nobody's fault made no difference to the situation.

Shatrov pondered in silence. His face bent forward, remained motionless.

"How quickly can the repairs be done?" he jerked out.

"If we send good men, I guess they'll manage in forty minutes or even half an hour."

Shatrov raised his head.

"We can't leave without doing the job. It's enough to have us all demoted. We'll risk coming up for half an hour. Who do you think would be the best to take charge of the work in the tank?"

Milovidov looked hard at the commander.

"Yes, but ... if we have to submerge quickly?..."

He did not finish his sentence. Words were not needed to define the fear in his mind. If they had to submerge quickly and for a long time, the repair gang could not be sure of getting out of the tank. They would perish.

Shatrov voiced the thought, showing that he had already considered everything.

"War is war, Nikolai Klementyevich! And it's our duty as sailors to risk our lives. Well, so who do you think would be the best to send?"

"I think Klusov would be best ... or Grebnev," Milovidov replied at once. "They're capable lads, and the men like them. If they take Ignatyev and Ovchinnikov, there won't be any time lost."

For a moment the merry boyish face of the midshipman, for whom he had a great liking, flashed before Shatrov's eyes.

"Send me Grebnev," said Shatrov quietly. "I'll speak to him. Yes, and while you're about it, give orders to prepare to surface. I'll be along myself in a minute."

Milovidov left.

Shatrov, as he waited for the midshipman to appear, tramped up and down the cabin, suddenly conscious of its cramped size, knocking against the various things in it—the stool, the stand by the bunk, the bookshelves jutting from the wall.

"You sent for me, Comrade Commander?"

The midshipman was standing in the open door.

"Yes, I sent for you, Comrade Grebnev... Come in for a moment. Sit down."

The midshipman edged into the cabin. When he sat down he had to throw his head back to look at his commander's face.

"There's been a slight accident," said Shatrov, looking at the midshipman. "The steering drive running through the ballast tank is damaged. You'll have to take some men and get it repaired as quickly as possible . . . because here, in the fiord, we can't stop long on the surface."

"Very good, I'll get it done," said Grebnev casually.

Thinking that the midshipman had not fully realized the danger of the task, Shatrov took a step forward and laid his hand on the lad's shoulder.

"I don't want to hide anything from you," he said, "if need arises, we may have to submerge suddenly. . . ."

"Well, and so what, Comrade Commander," muttered the midshipman with a touch of arrogance. "We understand all that. War's war. If you have to submerge—then submerge. Three men out of fifty... Very simple arithmetic."

Both his words—almost the very same ones that Shatrov himself had spoken just before he came—and his clear, boyish gaze, with a very slight squint, brought a wave of affectionate gladness to the commander. Shatrov would have liked to embrace the midshipman, to say something warm, appropriate, but he simply stood there beside him, shifting from foot to foot, his hard, strong fingers squeezing the thin, boyish shoulder.

"Well, all right then . . . and thank you," he said rather hoarsely. "Take your men and get ready. We're going to surface."

The submarine surfaced.

Like a wraith, the conning tower appeared in the thick darkness of the fiord, then the wireless antennae, the deck gun with its barrel at an angle, and finally the hull.

The hatch opened with a thud, and Shatrov's broad-shouldered figure appeared on the bridge, followed by other shadow-like forms.

The silence was disturbed only by the occasional light breeze that breathed in their ears. A road evidently passed along the nearby shore, beyond the irregular masses. Slender rays of light edged between stones and boulders. Muffled motor horns could be heard, the sound of a siren and the clatter of caterpillar treads.

"Quiet, quiet," said Shatrov under his breath to the men coming out onto the deck. "Comrade Grebnev, try to have as little knocking as possible inside the tank. We're right in Jerry's pocket here, so to speak. . . We've got to be careful. Checked your oxygen masks?"

He would have given a great deal in this last moment to have been able to add something to the dry, every-day instructions, something of his own, something warm and intimate, but it only surged in his heart and stuck in his throat.

"We've checked them, Comrade Commander," the midshipman's tenor answered beside him. "We shan't have to bang much, don't worry."

The manhole in the stern tank was already open. Three figures swiftly slid into the dark aperture as though sinking into the dark waters of the fiord. The men remaining on deck immediately made the hatch covers fast, and fastened the bolts and nuts in case of the sudden need to submerge. The three could no longer get out without outside help.

Shatrov could clearly picture them down in the dark belly of the tank. The torches would cast a dim light. Water would be trickling down the bitumen-painted walls, it would be gurgling menacingly down below, by the Kingston valves. It was from there, from these valves, that choking, battering tons of sea water would thunder in on the working men in case of a crash dive. It would probably be cold and damp in the tank, and it would smell bad. It would be difficult to keep one's balance on the slippery sides. Three men, stooping over the apparatus, working frantically against time. Conscious of the danger hanging over them, they were asserting their will to live, fight and conquer.

Faint rustlings from inside could actually be heard up above on the deck. From beneath the superstructure came the unintelligible sound of voices, and the cautious tapping of tools. Those quiet, peaceful, every-day sounds of work might have given the impression that the men were taking the matter too casually. Shatrov felt a wild desire to go and knock at the hatch cover, tell them to hurry. After all, they could see nothing of what was going on outside, did not know whether the danger threatening them was near or far. It was Shatrov who had to see the danger for them, and anticipate it.

"A motor launch, Comrade Commander," said the signalman standing beside Shatrov. "Probably a patrol—can you hear it puffing?"

Shatrov turned sharply towards the sudden sound. In the depths of the gulf, something was moving in the impenetrable blackness near the shore, wheezing quietly, cautiously.

"Action stations!" Shatrov ordered quietly.

The gun crew moved silently towards the bow gun. In the dense grey murk (the boat was in the shadow) the long barrel swung to starboard. For an instant the silhouette of a small craft, still far away, flickered in a slender moonbeam breaking through the clouds.

"Hold your fire till I give the command!" said Shatrov. "Keep the boat in the sights."

He could feel the mounting tension in every nerve, he could feel his heart beating—no faster than usual, but with hard, hammer strokes. The men working in the tank knew nothing of the death already stealing upon them.

Would he be compelled to give orders to submerge?

The thudding of engines came nearer. Shatrov felt that he could even hear the hissing and clucking of the water astern of the enemy boat. But the next second he realized that the sound was becoming fainter, more muffled, drawing away.

The dimly glowing hands of his watch told him that it was seven minutes past two. Only six minutes had passed since the work begun.

Like sun spots the moonrays flickered now here, now there on the fiord. Sometimes they would catch and hold for a second some small drifting boat. Opposite Shatrov, a broad band of moonlight stretched across the black infinity. The wet deck of the submarine began to gleam.

That was the worst moment of all.

Shatrov felt as though his own existence was merged with that of the three men working in the tank. He was there with them, cramped and awkward, in that steel case with no outlet. Their life was his.

Suddenly the sharp blades of two searchlights stabbed the darkness. They moved like gigantic feelers, crossed and parted, descended and slid over the dark surface of the fiord, feeling every inch of the water. Would they find the boat or not?—everything depended on that. If the boat was discovered then a crash dive was inevitable—a submarine cannot play the fool with shore batteries.

A long bluish beam like some spectral arm crept closer and closer. Its dead light played on the dimpled water, picked out some projecting object, some floating barrel or buoy. Slowly, implacably, the beam approached the boat, and Shatrov watched it, his fingers tightening on the cold rail.

He, the commander, had to think for everybody, decide for everybody.

The men who had remained inside, the men working in the tank, could see only that small part of the world which concerned them individually—the round drum of a flywheel, the face of a manometer. He could see everything, he must provide for everything and answer for everything. He had to be the strongest, calmest, wisest and most courageous of all.

He could see the signaller shifting his feet nervously and turning his head this way and that, as though bursting to say something but not quite daring.

"It's all right," said Shatrov hoarsely. "If anything happens we'll shift. Keep your shirts on!"

At that moment, as though it had tested their nerves sufficiently, the beam slipped aside and went out, fifty yards from the boat.

The second searchlight also disappeared. Again the darkness of the fiord was undisturbed.

Three cautious knocks with a spanner sounded on the hatchway cover. This was the signal that the work was finished, and Shatrov glanced at his watch in surprise. Twenty-three minutes had passed. Could they really have finished? Perhaps something else had occurred?

"Open the hatch! Quick!" Shatrov ordered.

He came down from the bridge onto the deck and when the black gaping mouth was uncovered, bent over the combings and himself helped them out of the tank.

Grebnev came last.

His clothing was wet, but Shatrov pulled his thin, youthful body out as lightly as a feather. He raised him over the deck and held him for a moment in the air.

"Well, how is it?" he asked, carefully setting the lad on his feet. "Everything all right?"

"Everything's all right, Comrade Commander!"

"Frightening down there?"

"Damp, Comrade Commander! And didn't smell very good."

But these prosaic remarks did not dash Shatrov.

"Smart lad! Smart lad!" he said, half ironically. "If you'd known all that was happening up here, you wouldn't have been feeling so perky... You got through pretty quickly, didn't you?"

"The lads worked well. Didn't have to hurry them."

"Well.... thank you! Thank you, Comrades! ..."

His hard, strong hand suddenly squeezed Grebnev's fingers in a steely grip.

Translated by Eve Manning

EFFENDI KAPIYEV

THE POET

In the summer of 1934 the first Congress of Soviet Writers was held. From every part of the vast Soviet land came poets, novelists and playwrights—representatives of all the peoples amalgamated in the multi-national Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Among the Union and autonomous republics represented was also Daghestan. The delegation of Daghestan included the old Lesgin Suleiman Stalsky, from the Ashaga-Stal village wearing his national costume, and the young Lakhe Effendi Kapiyev in European dress.

Daghestan means "land of mountains"; this tiny autonomous republic belonging to the Russian Federation, is situated by the Caspian Sea, north of the Caucasus, bordering on Georgia, Azerbaijan and the Russian regions of the R.S.F.S.R.

The population is not very large—the 1929 census showed only 845,000, but nevertheless it comprises an amazing number of different nationalities, languages and dialects. There are peoples of no less than seventeen nationalities in the towns and mountain villages speaking in eighteen languages or dialects. The principal nationalities among them are the Avars, the Darghins, the Kumyks, the Lakhs, the Lesgins, the Tyurks, and the Nogais. But there are also nationalities comprising only a couple of hundred people. It is no rare thing to find two neighbouring villages speaking different languages and there are even villages where each street has its own dialect.

Before the Revolution there were practically no books printed in the languages of Daghestan and the songs of the bards who themselves could neither read nor write, never penetrated beyond the country's borders. Under Soviet power, however, an extensive national culture and art has developed. And when the Congress of Soviet Writers met in Moscow in 1934, the people of Daghestan too were able to send their writers.

Even at that time, the name of the bard Suleiman Stalsky was known far and wide in the Soviet land, and after the congress he became still more popular. At the congress Maxim Gorky called him "the Homer of the twentieth century."

Effendi Kapiyev, who had a complete mastery of Russian, wrote down the old man's songs and translated them into Russian. More than that, he diligently collected the folk poetry of his country and studied its ways and customs. A few years later an interesting book of poems by Effendi Kapiyev appeared in a Moscow publishing house.

Soon after Suleiman Stalsky's death, Kapiyev began work on his book *The Poet*. He completed it in the beginning of January 1944 and sent it to the publishers. But he was not destined to see the appearance of his work—he died at the end of that same month.

Kapiyev himself said that his book was in no way to be regarded as a biography of Suleiman Stalsky. But naturally, the hero of *The Poet* has many of the characteristic features of the personality and life of Stalsky, with whom Kapiyev was on intimate terms, and it is no wonder that people who knew Stalsky find great similarity between him and the hero of Kapiyev's book.

Where lies the border between prose and poetry, I can never grasp.

L. Tolstoy.

... When the time comes to speak of the poet's secret, of the sources of his inspiration, or if one may so express it, the key to his talent, I arm myself with patience and my thoughts travel back to the peaceful shores of his every-day life.

The four seasons of the year—one after the other, they cast their radiance on me: yellow autumn, green summer, white winter, red spring.... Four times a year I visit Suleiman in his village.

And every time, when I hear him and see him, I ask myself the same questions:

"Wherein lies his greatness? Where does the poet begin?"

But the answer is hard to find in the leisurely prose of his daily life.

... Here is the mountain village, and here on the outskirts—the poet's home.

AUTUMN

The First Recollection

My searches for the source of the poet's inspiration begin in the autumn, because this is the classic time for poetry.

Recollections take me to a far-away place. The bloom is fading from the gardens. Late autumn reigns over the world. . . .

The red and yellow leaves flutter down to greet me, and beyond, hardly seen for the leaves, Suleiman sits on the waste ground before his house.

The waste ground is overgrown with orach and thistles. To the right of it stretch the gardens, sloping steeply. Suleiman is seated oriental fashion, leaning against an old wooden plough, left neglected here from a day long past. Ravens strut on the stony road at a distance. The village rising in the distance resembles a many-towered fortress. Suleiman's head is sunk on his breast. The faded autumn leaves whirl above him, falling lightly on his shoulders. . . .

"This is he, then, the poet!" I say to myself. "Am I perhaps at the gates of the mystery?.. So here is the birth of the song. It is the fall of the leaf, the gardens are withering. Do they remind him of his old age? The grey-blue mists gather in the hollows. (Are they, perhaps, wraiths of the earth's memory of springtime?) The trees stand as though plunged deep in a tranquil lake. The last joys of summer fly away on sparkling gossamer and the mere foretaste of winter makes them imponderable. . . ."

Of what could a poet be thinking at such a moment?. . . Of the vanity of human existence? Or the grandeur of death?

Alas! Suleiman is simply asleep.

From this waste ground the neighbouring hill is open to view. Out there in the full glare of the sunshine, two workers have been tiling the roof of the school since morning. The poet watched them for want of something else to do until he fell into a doze. . . .

He sits bent, his head sunk low on his chest. The ravens, unafraid, strut close to him on the stony road. (They sway a little as though their whole weight is in their tails.) Suleiman sleeps, never releasing his grip on his staff, which he holds with two fingers. The gentle autumn breeze stirs his grey hair and the tuft of grass growing out of the log. . . .

How transparent the sky is!

And how bright the sun!

Sunlight saturates everything around him. The road is strewn with leaves and the tall hazels in the copse at the ascent to the village rustle softly. Their rustling deepens the loneliness, it seems as though all and everything died long ago and there is no sign of life in the village, and the two men busy in the distance on the school roof have come from some other world to begin life anew.

Oh poet! Death is here in the yellow radiance of autumn. It seems to me the leaves are dying, the grass is dying. . . . How can one grow accustomed to this?

"Death, death," the leaves rustle. "Do you hear?"

Suleiman sleeps, snuffling slightly. His sheepskin cap has slipped down on his forehead, his lower lip droops. The shadows of the hazels lie obliquely across the waste ground and vanish beyond the steep slope. The trees are not far away; very likely the place where the poet is sitting was once the point at which several gardens met.

I wait for the poet to waken. The clatter of horses' hooves comes from a distance and I glance round.

A woman leading a saddled horse appears at the far end of the path. She is coming down from the village. A little barefoot boy with a tear-stained face trots after her, clinging to her skirt. At their approach the ravens are instantly on the alert, seem to rise on tiptoes and skim across the waste ground to perch in the branches of the hazels. The woman's head is bent and she looks anxious. She comes down by the shortest track, leading past the road to the spring. The horse picks its way cautiously, ears moving nervously, hooves slipping now and again on the steep track.

Suleiman gives a start. I do not know exactly when he opened his eyes, but the next moment he is sitting upright, looking straight before him as calmly as ever. The road before his eyes winds through the orchards and dwindles in the distance. It seems to be all ploughed up and at the sides there are piles of gravel for road making.

The woman goes round the hazel bushes and disappears suddenly in the ravine, to reappear below on the path in front of Suleiman. Now I can hear the little boy's whimpering as he trots along by her side, and the metal things clanking in the saddlebags.

"Why don't you let the boy ride the horse, Gulshara?" Suleiman asks suddenly in the tone of one who is pursuing a long conversation.

He yawns, pushes the heavy sheepskin cap off his brow to the side of his head. His forehead is beaded with perspiration.

The woman looks about her. Bringing the horse to a standstill, she hastily settles the shawl that has slipped to the back of her head, and looks around.

"I am here," Suleiman says, raising the staff with the bent end upwards. (He is sitting higher up and can hardly be seen from below for the weeds.)

A sudden change comes over the woman's face, and her arched black brows twitch.

"This is the Yenikent midwife's horse," she informs him delightedly. "Mahomed has a son!"

"Oho!" Suleiman rejoins, rousing himself. "That's not so bad! And where are the people?"

"They haven't come back from work yet," she tells him excitedly. "Some are working in the orchards, some are on the road. A boy was sent to bring Mahomed long ago but there's no sign of them yet. . . . I really don't know what to do. . . ."

"But it's a long way," Suleiman interrupts her quietly and, leaning on his staff, rises to his feet. "You think it's quite near, I suppose.

You've forgotten that they've started to repair the road from the bridge. Aye, you!" with a habitual gesture he settles the coat thrown around his shoulders and takes a few steps towards the woman. His eyes still have the shine of sleep.

"Well, and has everything gone all right?"

The woman shyly lays her hand on the boy's shoulder. (He stands before her, looking up awestruck at Suleiman.)

"Yes, everything's all right," the woman says. "I'm just going to water the horse now. The midwife's getting ready to go. . . ."

"Ha, ha, ha," Suleiman laughs, "as though Mahomed would let her go without pilau. It's a great occasion, this! You go and take the horse to the water, then to his stall, and let him have a rest. Will you?"

As he is speaking, he thrusts his arms into the sleeves of his coat. The woman smiles respectfully, the gleam of white teeth is seen even from the distance. . . . She lingers a moment, and then, seeing that Suleiman has no further intention of talking to her, she goes on her way.

"Hey, hey!" he calls after her, but without even looking at her, for he is squinting at the burrs that cling to his sleeve. "I'm not joking. You do as I said."

Then he stands for a long while, staring at the hill. The woman has gone. Suleiman's gaze is fixed on the spot between the trees where the newly-tiled roof of the schoolhouse glows pink in the sunshine. The workers, one on the ridge, the other on the edge of the cornice, are smoking their pipes. Suleiman considers them a few moments, and after a while getting a cigarette out of his breast pocket, lights it too.

He lights it without hurry.

Moving lightly over the grass in his new goat-hide shoes, he goes unhurriedly across the waste ground in the direction of the hazels at the roadside. His face is serious now. He pauses a moment, then goes on again. After a while he throws away his cigarette stub, crushes it under his heel, and stops by the roadside. The hand that holds the staff is thrown back, the other is pressed against his breast. Overhead whisper the century-old hazels, with autumn in their branches. Their sound is like the surge of the sea. The leaves fall circling and trembling at the old man's feet. . . .

But now he gives a start and raises his head. (And at the same time I am alert, too.) From beyond the orchards comes the thud of horses' hooves, and a rider appears suddenly like a whirlwind on the road. A white wall of dust rises behind him, barring off the orchards. He rides bareback and has to hold on to his cap with his right hand. His head is thrown back, his shirt bellies out in the wind.

On catching sight of Suleiman, the rider whips off his cap and the now rounded out dark face looks still more youthful.

"Egoi, Suleiman!" he calls, reining in his horse sharply. "Tell me to do anything you like, and I'll do it!" He passes his sleeve over his hot face and laughs breathlessly. The horse prances.

At that moment the woman leading the horse comes in sight over the edge of the gully.

"Mahomed," she cries, "Am I to get a present?"

"You are, of course, you are, Gulshara," the rider shouts, straightening up and waving his cap. "Not one present but a whole house-full!"

Suleiman is still standing, deep in thought. The woman hastens her steps and, taking the whimpering child by the hand, comes close to the copse. The rider glances from her to Suleiman, and since Suleiman is standing motionless, with bent head, the young man puts on his cap again and waits in silence.

"Listen," Suleiman says at last, rousing himself. (He takes the horse by the bridle and looks straight at the rider, with dignity.) "You'll call your son Maxum, won't you, Mahomed? I had a friend in Moscow called Maxum . . . Maxum Gorky. . . ."

"As you wish," the young man replies, growing serious at once.

"You'll call your son Maxum and invite everybody to the celebration, me, the midwife, and those workers over there. . . . Understand?"

"We'll have it just as you wish, Suleiman."

"Besides, Maxum means 'wise' in Parsee, you know?"

The rider bends forward and instead of answering, embraces Suleiman and kisses him on the brow.

"Well, how's the road?" Suleiman asks, in a more cheerful tone.

The rider replies with evident satisfaction that the bridge has been passed already and from there to Derbent the highroad is finished; all that remains is this side.

"Oh, is that so?" Suleiman says. "Bear in mind that (he points to the waste ground with his staff) the village square should be here. The highroad will pass there and then straight on. . . . Well, now you'll have to be going. . . . But wait, hold on a minute, there!"

He bars the horse's way with his staff, then, taking a few strides towards the little boy, swings him up.

"I told you, Gulshara," he says as he swings the child into the saddle and glances round at the woman. "That wasn't the right way to do things. The boy should ride the horse. That's what he's a boy for."

The horse starts and raises his head. Suleiman puts the small dusty feet into the stirrups, then with a faint smile, steps back and surveys the child.

"There now!" he concludes proudly. "Now we're off. A regular hero, eh? And mind you, if there's a war, you've got to throw yourself first at the enemy, and we'll come after you, d'you see?"

He goes back to his old place by the tree and with the manner of a host, speeding his guests, watches the couple. The rider, laughing softly to himself, makes way for the woman to pass. The boy keeps his seat in the saddle, clinging to the bow with both hands. The man's horse, still heated with the gallop, paws the ground restlessly.

"Maxum," the rider repeats in a tone of admiration as he takes leave of the poet. "Thanks, Suleiman, that was a good idea of yours. . . ."

Suleiman nods, and the tears start to his eyes.

"You must be going now," he whispers. "Good luck!"

Puzzled, the rider still lingers.

"What ails you, neighbour?"

"Go away!" Suleiman shouts, suddenly thumping his staff on the ground in anger. "I shall have time to laugh later on. . . . I am going to name the child, am I not? What do you think? I'll take him in my arms like this and whisper three times in his ear: Wise Maxum, my friend Maxum, welcome. . . ." He cannot finish the phrase, makes a gesture of dismissal, while the tears course down his cheeks. He wipes them away with his knuckles.

"Ah, my boy," he murmurs to himself. "Autumn is here. . . ."

. . . Then Suleiman stands alone, his head bent in rêverie, as he stares before him.

The light autumn breeze ruffles the fur of his big cap and whispers in the fallen leaves. In the distance the rider and the woman leading the horse recede farther and farther, higher and higher. The rider is talking to the little boy, who sits leaning forward, his body swaying in the saddle.

At this moment a hollow murmur swells from somewhere far beyond the gardens. The men on the school roof stop their work to stare down at the road, where it looks as though a big crowd were coming with songs and music.

The sound swells in volume.

"Egoi, Suleiman!" the rider shouts, turning. "Here's my brigade hurrying to congratulate me on my firstborn. Can you hear? Oho, ho!" (He waves his cap.)

Suleiman rises himself from his rêverie and glances back. The noise is coming nearer. Multiplied by the echoes in the orchards it spreads and becomes many-voiced. The gardens are alive. The former stillness is gone. ("Life, life," whispered the leaves to me.) The startled flock of ravens circles over the gardens. Above in the village women appear one after another on the roof tops and look down into the orchards. The zurnas and the roll of the drums are heard.

Suleiman crosses the road towards his house and notices his wife, who has been waiting for him for some time by the gate. Shading her eyes with her slim dark hand from under which only her prominent chin can be seen, she is looking at him against the sun. A coral ornament glows on her breast against the dark dress. Suleiman crosses the road slowly towards her.

"What has happened?" the old woman asks.

"Why, haven't you heard?" he exclaims in surprise. "A son is born to Mahomed. . . ."

SUMMER

The Second Recollection

In the middle of July, when the scorched earth is thirsting for moisture.

A deluge has broken upon the orchards and gardens.

It tosses and shakes the trees, and the whole world is engulfed in its sweeping, tempestuous rhythm.

Myriads of strings, it seems, are drawn between earth and sky. The roar and slash of the rain beats against the houses. The drops fall with the heaviness of metal, tearing the unripe fruit from the trees into the mud. The streets are impassable with black ragged torrents. The torrents wash under the heaps of stones and sweep them away with a clatter. They rush down like waterfalls, and their crests are yellow with clay, a boiling foam. Along the roadside ditches float ruined birds' nests, dead mice, straw and tufts of nettles.

Everything within sight is torn up and deafened.

The backs of the leaves are showing as in a hurricane. Solid streams of water pour down the trunks and it makes them seem alive, quivering like a jelly. The gutters are full to the brim, and the bubbles dance and swirl like the clash of sounding tambourines. From time to time the edges of the gutters give way and crumble, and there is an instant glimpse of the blue-grey earth, dry and filmed as though with cobweb: it is beaten down at once with the drops.

Overhead the water whirls.

The lightning flashes seem to be immediately overhead and can hardly be seen for the smoky mist of rain.

Between earth and sky myriads of strings are drawn, and on them the downpour plays a threatening, thundering cantata.

I ride into the village. Soaked to the skin, I stand knocking at Suleiman's door but no one answers. At the back of the verandah over whose balustrade the wet sunflowers sway in the rain, I discern a bed. A thin cheesecloth curtain is spread over it as a protection from the flies, and the bed is not made. Suleiman's shoes are standing under it. Through the gauzy curtain I imagine I can see his grey head on the pillow. Very likely he is curled up asleep, because the red quilt rises and falls evenly in the middle of the bed.

I know how sweet sleep is when it is raining. The leisurely, peppermint coolness which running through the blood, sucks your soul into a dim oblivion, the happiness of being close to nature, and the awareness of one's loneliness in shelter—all these are familiar to everyone from childhood. I seat myself on the low three-legged stool by the door and wait for the poet to awake.

The rain is gradually lessening. The drops fall with a lighter sound: they are not so large as before, and the yellow distances are clearing through the thinning veil of the rain.

"This is he, then, the poet!" I say to myself. "Am I perhaps at the gates of the poet's mystery? . . . All around him are the wind-

swept gardens and, tossed by the summer downpour, do they not remind him of his childhood? The trees bristle with their armour of foliage. A joyful green radiance emanates from them. The soil swells under them. Streams of water radiate from the trunks. There is a smell of savoury mint and wet bark. The sunflowers, as though quivering with rapture, present their bowed necks to the raindrops. The air is swept by waves of watery dust like white phantoms. . . . Oh, childhood! What can be purer than the reminiscences of childhood?.. And this dream brought on by the sound of rain with the memories crowding together, running into each other, this poet's dream—is it not here that the song begins?"

So I think sitting on the low, carved, three-legged wooden stool, glancing every now and again at the sleeping Suleiman or staring straight before me into the yard. Filling with the wind, the thin cheesecloth curtain billows over the old man. The edge of the blanket is wet with rain. But now the rain is passing and patches of deep blue sky can be glimpsed here and there among the clouds.

No, the sky is not deep blue but a clear light blue in the mountains after rain, and one sees it as a flat surface. When the clouds, unfurling and merging, disperse, in their interstices shines a fathomless azure so fresh and joyful that one catches one's breath with the sheer unexpectedness of it. The clouds drift away, but the azure remains, pure and untouched. And suddenly the rain grows tame, goodnatured: it has all been no more than a joke, a piece of childish mischief—and so let life go on!

The sun is still hidden but on the far green slopes lie vivid golden squares of sunbeams. They slip downwards and the earth lights up with a new sparkle in response. They glide nearer and nearer, and suddenly they are at hand on the neighbouring slope. From the curling foliage of the gardens that glints in the sunbeams' radiance rises a white smoke. The beams break from behind the clouds in a broad golden sheaf and with them a blessed quiet falls upon the earth. . . .

Then the roar of the torrents can be distinguished; they are still racing through the streets, and crossing the mountain tracks. The noise is monotonous, emphasizing the stillness, like the roar of a train that has just passed, and you still stand watching it.

Drops are falling from the trees. (They leave tiny pits dimpling the soil.) The gardens and orchards are still under the spell of the storm. The walls of the verandah close by the cheesecloth curtain are dappled with quivering light. The stone steps are porous and gleam smooth. . . . Suleiman is still asleep.

I can hear the cocks crowing in the yard. The thunder is over. A cock stands on the brink of a bright rain pool, his red and green plumage reflected in it. When he has crowed he listens for a moment, as much as to say—did that go off all right?—and then struts away, expressing his self-complacent approval in his own rooster language. A yellowish dog, lame and wet, appears from somewhere and laps the water, baring his teeth at it. Across the yard a tall stately gander and his family move in procession towards the gate. Life awakens in the orchards. The birds perch in the branches. . . .

A minute passes. Each bird tries its own note. It reminds one of the musicians tuning up in an orchestra. Gradually the bird notes weave into harmony. The confusion of sounds blends in a triumphal choir. The silence is gone. Music floats in on me from every side, and now it is no longer possible to distinguish the nightingale's flute from the woodpecker's drumming.

The beetles hum, the grasshoppers chirrup. The silvery trill of the lark hangs in the air like the note of a bell. The bees are loud, the sparrows twitter and the many-voiced orchestra is conducted by the oriole; he perches on a neighbouring roof, his long beak tapping the cornice.

The music broadens, floats over the earth, everything merging now in one mighty symphony of life. It swells and I sit deafened, uncomprehending, it grows, this symphony as though rising in a crescendo before the final chords. . . .

Boom!

I give a start: the chord is struck, and simultaneously Suleiman appears in the opening of the gate as though in a film. . . .

He is barefoot. His legs are bare to the knees and the mud is over his ankles. This makes his feet look curiously rounded like a camel's hooves. He is laughing as he enters the gate with the spade across his shoulder, wet to the skin and answering someone with a joke. A minute later his wife follows him. Her eyes are downcast, and she picks her way carefully. An empty sack is over her head, cornerwise, it is wet and hangs down her back to the waist.

"Pooh, pooh, old woman! You're a champion, it seems," Suleiman says, laughing and setting down the spade. "I declare I never thought you could run as fast as that! You'd think you were a mountain goat!. . ."

He cleans the mud from his feet on the spade and, straightening his back, fairly shakes with laughter. The old woman goes slowly past him, silent as before.

. . . At that moment, hearing the master's voice, a white cat jumps off the bed from under the cheesecloth curtain. It was she who had lain curled up on the pillow. I start up in surprise and let her pass.

The cat stretches and yawns. And passes me with her tail in the air. I stand staring.

"You're always like that," the old woman says boldly, turning on Suleiman. She reddens and tears the sack from her head. (I could swear she has kept it on till now so that she can tear it off angrily when she feels at home.) "You are always like that: if I say white, you say black, of course! It's an old habit of yours!"

"Wait a minute," Suleiman protests, "I'm saying it's mixed—half white, half black!"

His moustache bristles as he tries to control his laughter, and trying not to give himself away, stares into the distance with his head thrown back. And there, spanning the earth with one end in the clouds and the other in the steep green slope, shines a rain-

bow, and the rain rides away from beneath it like cavalry with slanting spears. Far, far away are the mountain tops, their snows glittering in the sunshine. They, too, are framed by the rainbow and the slanting spears of the retreating rain cut across them.

Suleiman stands in a pool of clear rain water, out of which the grass blades stick up and are reflected, too, only twisted and dark against the blue of the mirrored sky. Finding no words, the old woman looks at the man in silence. She heaves a deep sigh. Suleiman hops about in the pool, scrubbing one foot with the other. He pretends he does not notice her. His deputy's badge gleams red on his breast.

At that moment a tractor passes along the street. It appears in the gate opening as it were on the cinema screen. It is towing after it two traps, coupled like railway carriages and loaded with people. Among the motley crowd—mostly in red—in the foremost carriage, women are standing, in the second, men wearing wet sheepskin caps. They all carry spades and are returning home to the village from the direction of the river, where the water power station is being built. The tractor splashes through the water as it passes and the women supporting each other in the shaking carriage laugh merrily.

"Look," the old woman says, pointing through the gate, "all the people are laughing at you. I told you 'it's going to rain, Suleiman, don't insist, don't meddle in the engineer's business,' and there!—you see!"

Suleiman squats down washing the toes of his right foot. The spade sticks up beside him. For some time he watches with narrowed eyes the passing procession and, waiting until it has vanished from view, jumps up suddenly. From his outspread fingers the water drips back into the pool.

"The grass the snake hates grows, it seems, by its hiding place," he says, paling a little. "Eh, old one?"

The old woman, struck dumb, goes for no reason at all into the back of the yard, where the shed stands. Suleiman watches her through narrowed lids.

The white cat sits with her back towards me on the now dry, sunny stone doorstep, licking her paws with her pink tongue as she waits for her master and mistress. She holds her paw across her chest exactly as a patient carries his hurt arm in a sling. At Suleiman's call, she raises her head. The singing gardens around us are many-voiced as an organ. The rainbow spans the mountains. Children are already calling to one another in the street.

How pleasant, how blessed the world is now after the thunderstorm has passed!

In a minute or two the old woman comes out of the shed, carrying a few eggs for an omelette, and goes towards the house. At the foot of the steps she pauses, tucking a wisp of grey hair behind her ear, and scowling at Suleiman. He is still standing in the pool, and has evidently forgotten his anger. His underlip protrudes as he draws a packet of cigarettes out of his breast pocket and finds it hopelessly ruined by the rain.

WINTER

The Third Recollection

There is an old saying that "Fire is the rose of wintertime."

The blue winter dusk enshrouds the village. Beyond it, the last of the brief sunset still lingers in the west, a bar of deep rose broken by the black silhouettes of the houses. On the edge of the slope the tombstones in the cemetery stand askew, sharply outlined against the snow. The reddish eye of the moon glimmers over the village. The lights have not yet been lit in the houses. The evening is dreary. . . .

I can see the stooping figure of an old man coming down the track from the village. He moves slowly and, by the way he sets his staff before him, it is easy to recognize him as Suleiman. A grey dog follows him at a respectful distance. Every now and again the old man halts and glances back over his shoulder. The gaunt black trees stand on either hand. The snow, which had begun to thaw as it always does on a sunny day in the mountains, shows vague glades in the twilight. The gardens and orchards are deserted. Suleiman follows a scarcely noticeable track down to his home, and above him, if one looks away from him, in the opposite direction, the reddish moon moves across the sky, entangled in the boughs of the trees.

"This, then, is the poet," I say to myself. "Now at length, I have reached the source of the mystery." The gardens around him stand in frozen silence, and held fast in the spell of austere slumber, burden his soul with sadness. The poet cannot sit at home. He spends the long winter evenings among his friends in conversation and thought. . . . The old men probably gather in the square, if not around the fire indoors. Throwing around their shoulders their shaggy sheepskin cloaks, with the long sleeves sewn up at the ends (these sleeves were not made to thrust the arms into them, but only to make the cloak twice as heavy and therefore warmer) they recall the past and tell the news in leisurely fashion. And the poet, perhaps, tunes his chungur. The fire on the open hearth smokes. The blue dusk filters in at the windows and merges with the smoke. Suleiman recites in a singsong voice the verses he has composed beforehand and, having heard the approval of the old neighbours, rises to depart.

"Stay a while longer," the old men say, "it is not late."

"Nay, the old wife will be waiting for me at home."

So home he comes. The track is barely visible in the ghostly moonlight. He is stooped and his gaze is fixed on the ground. The un-

peopled evening and the bare silent orchards close in on him from every side. . . .

As he goes down to the road, he stops suddenly. Behind the village, the sunset has faded and the heavy, icy sky is now equally blue everywhere, flung over all like a canopy. And he stands down at the very bottom, a small unnoticeable figure in the wastes of evening. The village towers above him to the left. A light gleams out here and there in a window.

Motionless, gazing into the distance, Suleiman listens to the creaking of cart wheels on the road. The creaking unwinds like a mournful, fretted string. High on the darkening slope, as though in response to the wheels, the dogs set up a curious creaking bark. This is the evening bark and it always awakens an answering echo in the gardens.

After standing a while, Suleiman goes on his way unhurriedly. His dog is ahead of him now and, pricking up its ears, looks taller and sets off at a trot to meet the cart. The old man keeps to the side of the road, though there is nothing in sight.

He follows the track. The cart emerges gradually as though born of the darkness. At first it is a vague chaotic mass of shadows shifting and merging on the road. Then some angles grow clear. Two swollen black shapes stretch out ahead of it. The shapes have horns; they are oxen. A vague outline of a round sheepskin cap and the dull glint of glass quivers on the cart. The huge slow wheels become discernible only after the yoke and the heads of the oxen can be made out.

Now it is clear that there are several carts on the road. At sight of them Suleiman puts his hands behind his back and stands silent, under a tree. It happens to be that hazel tree which grows near his house and which he is fond of sitting under on summer evenings.

The twisted boughs, black and white, overhang the road as though awaiting their prey. The carts creak. The large-headed dog that stalks alongside is so full of his own dignity that he does not even glance at Suleiman's dog. The poet stands there in silence, leaning on his staff, waiting for the carts to pass him.

But when the first comes abreast of him, he straightens himself and is on the alert.

"Safarbek," he calls out, taking a closer look, "is that you? What sort of a cap is that you've got on your head?"

"Bah! Suleiman! Woa!"—this to the oxen.

The elderly man who springs down from the cart is of medium height and wears a round cap of smooth sealskin. He runs ahead and stops the oxen.

"Well, Suleiman, this is the most expensive cap I could find in the town," he says, going up close to the poet. "How did you make it out in the dark?"

He takes off his heavy mitt and, with a hasty greeting, stands stroking his moustache. It is long and grey, and the ends stick out like chips. The hoarfrost crumbles from it. The old man wears a sheepskin coat, like Suleiman's, tightly belted, which gives it a certain jauntiness.

"Aye, that white sheepskin cap I once had—everybody knew it," he says with a sigh. "I'll never have another like it."

"Safarbek," Suleiman protests, "that was a year ago. Time to forget it. How many caps have you bought altogether?"

"This is the fourth," the old man says sorrowfully. "And I'll buy more yet. Even if I've to go to Hindustan, I'll buy one worthy of that. . . ."

"This is a good cap," Suleiman remarks, "but I must have a look at it by daylight." Out of politeness he removes it from the old man's head and fingers it.

The other stands with downcast eyes. He looks comical now with the thick Caucasian hood wound about his neck, and his narrow, shaven head. His breath comes out in white steam, veiling his white moustache.

Meanwhile the carts have come to a standstill one behind the other, and the creaking of the wheels reverberating, descending step by step, dies down and recedes somewhere into the distance. Silence falls. One or two of the drivers come up to the two old men.

"Yes," Suleiman is saying, "this is nothing more or less than a Moscow cap. Well, and what was the bazaar like?"

Putting on his cap again, the other sighs heavily.

"The bazaar. . . ."

Then, suddenly remembering something, he smites his forehead and runs back to his cart.

"I forgot," he calls out, "I declare I clean forgot it! I bought you what you wanted, Suleiman. You remember, don't you, what you wanted last year?"

He takes down a glass cylinder hanging from the framework of the cart in front. Suleiman watches him, puzzled.

"I've tried it," the old man announces proudly, "with kerosene in it, even." He shakes it close to his ear, then hands Suleiman a "Bat" hurricane lantern.

"Oho, Safarbek! Thank you, thank you very much indeed. How much did it cost?"

"We'll talk about that later," the old man says hastily. "You light it first." He gets a box of matches out of his breast and fussing a little, demonstrates how the glass should be raised. Suleiman squats down, keeping his balance with the aid of his staff. The cart drivers cluster in silence around the two old men, looking at the lantern with curiosity. The thin branches they use to drive their oxen stick out like pikes in their hands. Some of them use the opportunity for a quiet smoke. Suleiman's dog and the proud large-headed strange dog (he has a shaggy head and muzzle all furred with hoarfrost) watch the light from a distance in astonishment.

The hurricane lamp casts a strange purple light around. The shifting shadows on the road spring into animation, dart over the snow, and the boughs sparkle on the trees under which the lantern stands. The ice-covered part of the trunk gleams like nickel. Even the oxen turn their heads towards the light and the reflection makes their eyes glow like embers in the dark.

"Good!" Suleiman says, tapping the glass. "No, don't blow it out, Safarbek. I want to take it home, lit up, to the old woman . . . ."

He gets to his feet and with perceptible excitement takes the lantern from his old friend's hand. His eyes glitter.

"Well, there you are," the other says, trying to keep an indifferent tone. "I swear, Suleiman, that before I got out of Derbent ten people, at least, asked me where I bought it."

"You're a wonder, Safarbek," Suleiman says approvingly. "Well, thank you." He holds the lantern away from him to see the effect, then, with a nod of satisfaction, straightens himself.

"Hm-m!"

"Where have you come from just now?" Safarbek inquires, thrusting the matches into his bosom and preparing to go.

"Oh," Suleiman replies, "that's a long story."

"Why, what's happened? What's the matter?" they all ask. The drivers, who had been about to go, gather closer again.

"That lame fool," Suleiman says, thumping his staff on the ground. "Who gave him the job of taking care of the collective farm orchards? . . I noticed long since that the fences on the cemetery side had been pretty well thinned out. It seems he used the stakes for his own fire. What do you think of that! There's a watchman for you! I've just been round to give him a piece of my mind."

"What is he—a wrecker?" Safarbek says in astonishment.

"He's a blockhead, that's what he is," Suleiman says angrily. "When the chairman comes, I'll tell him to give that fellow a lesson."

"He ought to be kicked out of the collective farm," Safarbek shouts, shaking his fist. "That'll teach him!"

The drivers are standing, looking very grave, ready to join in the conversation.

"You'd better be getting on now, we'll talk it over tomorrow," Suleiman says at last, frowning.

Safarbek shakes his head sadly, then suddenly alert, urges on his oxen. They start off. First one cart creaks on its way, then another, and a third. The drivers standing around Suleiman, mount their carts as they come abreast. The night is filled with the creaking and rattling of the wheels.

"Well, so there you are, Suleiman," says Safarbek, as he takes leave of the poet. "When you have to go out to meetings on dark, rainy evenings, winter, summer and autumn, you'll have this lantern to light your way. Eh? And remember, we're going to drink a bottle of wine, you and I, one of these days."

"Why," Suleiman rejoins thoughtfully, "as to the meetings—that goes without saying. But it'll be useful when I go out to visit people, too. And if visitors to my house sit late of an evening, I can lend them the lantern, and they'll send it back by the boy next day. The only thing is, Safarbek, we talked about it last year and now it's a bit late. We're going to have electric light here soon. . . ."

"You'll be the only one with a lantern like this," Safarbek replies impressively. "Electricity is quite a different thing. . . ." He moves off a little way, then stops again, looking at Suleiman. "I'd thought of getting my son married this year," he has to shout to be heard above the creaking wheels. "And then I changed my mind—better not. Let him go into the army unmarried. When he comes back, we'll have electric light here and then we can celebrate the wedding, eh? I haven't played the lute for forty years. D'you remember how I used to play the lute? But I'll play then for certain."

Suleiman stands with the raised lantern like a railway guard.

"Well, you'd better be going, Safarbek," he says, his eyes narrowing as he peers into the darkness. "This is a big thing. We'll have to talk about it tomorrow!"

. . . The carts creak away. Suleiman lowers the lantern and whistles to his dog. Then he turns slowly towards his house. Gaunt spectres of black trees rear up against the white fields. The lantern swings in his hand and casts yellow patches on the snow. The dog trots along on the light side. Thousands of tracks, even the claw points of birds, can be seen in the snow now.

Far away, in the heart of the enshrouded village the dogs bark. The gradually receding creak of the wheels unwinds like a reluctant, fretted string, sounding a note of bygone sadness that troubles no more but still haunts one. The moon is low now, almost touching with its sharp horn the square black tower of the minaret. Suleiman goes on in silence. Vague stealthy shadows flit through the gardens. The desert wastes of the evening are soundless and cold. . . . As he goes into the verandah, Suleiman stamps his feet to shake off the snow. Then he raps on the door with his staff, holding the lantern high over his head. His dog stands behind him, wagging its tail and looking up at the light.

In a minute the old woman will appear in the doorway. And Suleiman stands waiting for her, choking back his laughter and raising the lantern high above his head.

SPRING

The Fourth Recollection

The signs of spring are well known: the running brooks, the birds' return, the swelling buds, and so forth.

Do you know what spring begins with in the mountains?

It begins with bulls' horns.

The snow still lies on the fields (true, it is already soft and tracks in it fill with water), and mornings are chilly and overcast. The mists linger as before in the gardens, hanging in grey-blue woolly shreds among the trees. No birds sing. But the bulls come home of an evening with their horns clotted

with mud. They move with a heavy swinging gait, and foretasting the spring, root in the ground and bellow. A tremor goes through their bodies. Their eyes are veiled. Then we say in our part of the world that spring is on the bridge and will reach the village any time now.

The old women carry out the shaggy sheepskin coats that have become crumpled and matted in the course of the winter, and hang them out under the verandah roofs. The old men sit under the walls of the houses, leaning on their staffs, held straight out before them, and their eyelids droop sleepily. The yard steams and smokes.

The trees at this time of the year have an oily, gleaming blackness and ramosity.

Deposits of last year's leaves are revealed at the bottom of the ditches (they are cemented by snow and lie in layers).

The sunlight is yellow, it shines on the gates, attracting the cats, which are very lean after the winter. They pick their way cautiously across the yard, so as not to soil their paws.

The waste ground is green with the first young grass. Sparrows twitter gaily on the house tops, then alight on the ground, hopping about like puppets on strings before the dreaming old men. . . .

So it is spring now. This time I make no guesses. My imagination paints the poet in the midst of blossoming trees. The gardens around him are awakening to life, and, swept by the gale of pink apple blossom, fill his thoughts with dreams. He stands silent, listening to the murmur of the spring brooks. The poet is pensive and sad. He may be thinking of his youth, or he may be enjoying his happiness (even happiness is sad, friends, at times). But I make no guesses. The streams cross my path and the earth around me swells with the sap of spring.

I come upon the poet in the yard of the collective farm administration office. He has just left the office, from which comes the rising hum of voices and he is standing at the head of the steps. A little distance away, the tractor drivers, sitting on a rusty saw-toothed wheel that has been thrown away and has grown into the ground, are shaving. They are in the sunniest spot, and one of them, who has finished, is sitting bareheaded, reading the paper aloud, and flapping the first persistent fly away from his shaven head.

A thin woman with an infant in her arms is standing in the middle of the yard with her back towards Suleiman. She is talking to another woman whose eyebrows quiver whenever she smiles. The tractor driver is reading something about Birobijan and the Jewish settlers. Suleiman stands at the top of the steps looking down about the yard, and listening, or perhaps thinking his own thoughts.

"Bi-ro-bi-jan, Bi-ro-bi-jan," the tractor driver spells out.

It is a big yard. In front of the shed where the piles of packing cases glimmer white and tractors stand against the wall, the pools have not yet dried. The sun is reflected in them. Suleiman, blinking at the sunlight, gazes out above the roof of the shed, then turns and looks at a crow cawing on a pole in the garden. . . .

The crow flies away. Suleiman stands a minute longer, then comes down the steps and, pondering on something, goes slowly across the yard to the open gate. . . The tractor drivers leave off whatever they happen to be doing and watch him. He passes them and the two women without a glance, without turning aside, but at the gate he stops.

Wheeling round with dignity, he returns to the women, who cease speaking and wait. Then, changing his staff from his right to his left hand, he pats the baby's cheek twice, and waits a moment, without dropping his hand.

The baby does not laugh. His shiny black eyes watch Suleiman attentively. On the breast of his frock silver ten kopek pieces have been sewn as a precaution against the evil eye. He wears a tall sheepskin cap like a man's, with a top of stitched red taffeta.

Very carefully, the old man raises the boy's cap by the pompon and peers at the top of his head, which, though still soft, is already shaven and blue from the shaving. The women, trying to hide their smiles, watch him.

"Maxum Gorky," Suleiman says impressively, "Maxum Mahomedovich!"

He puts the child's cap on again, and without another word, straightens himself with dignity and goes on his way. When he reaches the gate, he pauses once again. Watching the women from this vantage point, and turning something over in his mind, he raises his finger and says, very seriously:

"When the child learns to say the word 'stone', his crown will harden . . ." and pointing to his own, he goes out of the gate.

Here he stands for some time, with bent head. His usually upright figure is bowed. The street is deserted. He stands in the shadow of the gateway, with his left hand pressed to his heart. . . .

Then with a start he raises his head. A very old man is coming down the steep street, waving his hand for Suleiman to stop.

Suleiman sees him, and something ironic, or perhaps goodnatured, comes into his expression.

He comes out into the middle of the street.

The other old man comes on with quick short steps. His shaggy coat is open and the manner in which he puts down his feet is like that of a helpless child. He tries to hold himself straight. In his right hand, flung out sideways, he holds a long-stemmed pipe. Smoke rises from it.

"Anything new, Mezhvedil?" Suleiman asks when the old man is close to him.

The other gets his breath with difficulty, but still takes a pull at his pipe importantly before he answers.

"Aye, Suleiman," he says at last. "You don't know the things that are going on. Pigs have been brought to our village. . . ."

"Yes, I know that," Suleiman replies calmly. "I heard about it."

"Moslems!" the old man goes on with anger, "anything you like, only not pigs, for heavens' sake! Who can eat pork?"

Suleiman gives the old man a queer glance out of the corner of his eyes and after a moment's thought, says:

"I don't know, I'm sure, Mezhvedil. Hazbulat bought a small pig because he has his

wife's relatives staying here and treated them to pork. He married a Russian as you know."

"Eh?" the old man asks—he is rather deaf.

"I'm telling you it was a tractor driver—one of our fellows—he was giving his wife's Russian relatives a dinner." Suleiman raises his voice in some irritation.

"Then he ought to kill it," the other shouts, "why let a pig run about the streets?"

Suleiman utters an exclamation and spits viciously on the ground; evidently he is not too well pleased either that there is a pig roaming the village, but he assumes an air of indifference and says loudly, with a glance round:

"Aye, Mezhvedil, what difference is there between pork and a chicken? None whatever! I haven't eaten it, of course, but the people say so. . . ."

"It's the Russians that say so," the old man interrupted him. "They're infidels and they talk a different tongue. Pf! Nothing's a sin for them."

"Oho, ho!" Suleiman suddenly recoils and strikes his staff violently on the ground.

"Less of this kind of talk, you, devil!" he shouts in Russian, "we don't want such talk, you, black soul!"

The other old man stares at him, his eyes bulging.

"What do you think?" Suleiman goes on, now lapsing into his native Lezgin tongue again, his face taking on a dull earthen tinge. "I'll have to give you a talking-to, Mezhvedil," and he shakes his fist threateningly at him.

"No, no," the old man squeaks, "that'll never do. I'm older than you. What are you thinking of?"

Suleiman tries to control his anger. The old man wipes his beard with his sleeve and, blinking hard, puts his pipe into his mouth. Dead silence reigns for a while.

"You'll be starting to eat pork next, will you?" he says complainingly.

"No!" says Suleiman sharply. "You needn't eat it either, Mezhvedil, unless you want to. Who is asking you to eat it? I don't care for pigs. But why do you talk dirt?"

"Eh?" the old man asks.

"I'm saying you talk dirt," Suleiman shouts at him. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself! Go away! From now on I'll talk only Russian to you."

He gives the old man a stern look, then turning abruptly, moves away.

"Wait," the old man pleads, stretching out his pipe.

Suleiman does not halt or turn back. He goes steadily on his way, planting his staff firmly on the ground as he goes, and his brow is dark. The street is very steep. Dust showers down on his shoulder from the low stone wall of a yard. Glancing up, he sees a black kid.

"Can't you walk on the soil, you ninny!" he shouts at it in Russian, and halting for a moment, stamps his foot at it.

The kid stares down, its green eyes are sinister. Suleiman pushes it off the wall into the yard with his staff.

He walks at a quicker pace. His gaily-coloured socks are splashed with mud. Now he is walking in the very middle of the street that slopes steeply down to his house.

"Suleiman!" someone calls and the echo repeats the name.

The street is deserted.

Suleiman stops dead and sees a tall, gaunt old man seated, warming himself in the sun in the niche of the gateway. The figure is so grey that it almost blends with the stone: the grey beard, the full, rounded folds of the cloak, the immobile grey face. Suleiman stands a while, with a puzzled look on his face, and then, closing his eyes for a moment, asks him:

"Shahsuvar, could you bring yourself to eat pork for a thousand rubles?"

"Aye, Suleiman," the old man replies, "if it wasn't for my rupture. But why do you ask?"

"Bah!" Suleiman exclaims in amazement, "this is news," and without another word, he shakes his head and turns to go.

"Wait a minute, neighbour," the other calls out, "where are you off to? Have you been to the office? Is there anything new?"

"We're starting tomorrow," Suleiman answers him as he walks away. Then, as though suddenly remembering something, he halts again. "I asked them to give that Mezhvedil," he says, pointing in the direction of the office, but looking at the old man in the niche, "I asked them to give him, as the oldest member of the collective farm, the chance to sow the blessing, the first handful of seed. Now I'm against it! . . He seems to be still something of a tsar's man—talks like that, anyway."

Suleiman nods his head and makes a pause. "He is, indeed!" he says, then, glancing down the street, suddenly straightens himself and frowns sternly.

The solitary figure of Mezhvedil, with whom he has just had a passage-of-arms, appears in the distance.

The old man is bowed. His long-stemmed pipe still smokes in his outflung hand. He has evidently been hurrying to overtake the poet, because large drops of perspiration stream down his brow from under the rusty-coloured sheepskin cap.

"Where might you be going?" Suleiman demands in Russian. (His face wears an expression that is stern and businesslike.)

"Suleiman," the old man says in a complaining tone, as he takes a couple of steps forward, "when I was young like you, I used to be respectful to my elders. My liver is bad: why do you talk to me in that tone?"

A mischievous sparkle comes into Suleiman's eyes, but he controls his laughter and turning abruptly to Shahsuvar, who sits in his niche like a stone idol, says:

"So that's settled, Shahsuvar?" he raises his voice so that the whole street can hear. "You're going to buy only four pigs—no more? Will they be enough for you?"

Both the old men give a start and the one in the niche cranes his neck, like a bird in amazement and looks Suleiman up and down. (Can he have heard aright, or has he perhaps failed to understand something here?) But Suleiman can no longer control his laughter, and so turns hastily and hurries away down the street, well pleased with the effect of his joke.

. . . His pace is brisk as he comes nearer to his home. Girls with pitchers on their shoulders come up the track towards him from the spring. They are all well built and wear

brightly-coloured dresses. Their double sleeves hang from the elbow and flutter like wings in the breeze. Their pitchers are poised and they climb the hill in a gay, chattering bevy. The track is narrow. On seeing Suleiman, they form two lines and halt, very straight and still, for him to pass. Their eyes are downcast, but the smiles still linger on their lips.

Suleiman disappears for a moment in this throng, but when he had passed, he is seen walking with his staff, and never turning his head.

"Bi-robi-jan, Birobi-jan, what kind of place is Birobijan?"

He sings these words over to himself in Russian, not to annoy anybody, but simply because he is in a good humour. His tread is firm and measured.

And in the street where the girls glide, a colourful crowd gladdening the eye, the gaunt old man sits in his stone niche, his gaze fixed on the other old man who stands a little distance away. He is standing where Suleiman has just stood, and forgetful of everything, stares at the spot where the poet has vanished behind the trees.

The girls are moving nearer.

The old man rouses himself with a start, and puts his pipe in his mouth, but it has gone out and so he shakes out the ashes and thrusts it into his bosom.

"Hey!" he calls out threateningly to the girls, and straightening himself, makes an imperious gesture.

One of the girls steps out from the group and, going up to him, half turns and tilts the pitcher. Holding on to the neck of the vessel with both hands he drinks. When he has quenched his thirst, he turns away without a word of thanks, to his neighbour. Taking off his winter sheepskin cap with its greasy soiled rim, he mops the perspiration off his face. The heavy sheepskin cloak hampers his movements.

"Shahsuvar," he begins anxiously, passing the cap over his face again and again. "What are we to do now with this Suleiman? He's at my liver, my very guts. I can't be on bad terms with him."

He stands in the middle of the street, his dim old eyes seeking his neighbour. The spring sunlight shines on his smooth skull. His ears are covered with yellow fluff like that of a chicken.

"Hey!" the other old man in the niche calls out, rousing himself all of a sudden. (Hey-ow! —the echo repeats.) "Hey there girls, give me a drink, too. . . Come and sit down, Mezhvedil. We'll have to think about it, we have to think everything out from the beginning."

The girls, who are a good way off by now, stop and look round. There is laughter in their faces. Their brilliant, winged dresses flutter in the breeze. . . .

CONCLUSION

Poet Suleiman! Four seasons of the year surround you alternately with their radiance: yellow autumn, green summer, white winter, red spring... How shall I explain wherein your greatness lies! Where the poet in you begins? and what his qualities are?

. . . And now it is evening. We are seated on a rug in a small, tidy house, lit by a lamp with an enamel, plate-like shade, suspended from the rafters. Suleiman sits leaning against the post that supports the roof, not in the middle but nearer to the door. Hanging on the post are a large chased spoon, a sheepskin cap, an elegant chungur, a whip and man's cloak. The lamp does not give a strong light. The round black shadow of the shade swings on the ceiling beams. The old woman has just lit the light, and having placed our supper before us, has gone into the other room. Suleiman offers me some honey, and we talk of poetry and drink our tea. . . .

Everything in this house is the same as in others. A large photograph of Lenin and Stalin, the one in which they are taken together, hangs in a broad frame, between the windows. Lower down, across the whole width of the wall photographs of Suleiman, cut out of newspapers, are pasted up. (The cuttings are yellow and pasted somewhat crookedly.) Beside them there is a long shelf with crockery. Over the door hangs the black disc of the loudspeaker. The other wall is plastered with Chemical and Air Defence Association posters, with diagrams of different systems of rifles. There is also an old film poster from heaven knows where exhorting us not to walk on the left side of the pavement but to go to see the film. On the floor by the wall are neatly-rolled carpets and spare mattresses. Great copper basins and ewers stand between the post and the door. Suleiman and I are alone. He offers me honey that smells of mint and thin cakes of Lezgin bread pricked all over with a fork.

"You follow me about like a shadow," Suleiman says, "what are you looking for, Habib? A poet isn't a bird, though he may have a bird's heart in his breast. Yes, that's true! Everyone knows that in the birds' flight the strength of their hearts means more than the strength of their wings. Remember this! And as for me, you can answer plainly: the seasons have allowed the poet Suleiman to live on the earth. These are his qualities. A simple old man with a bird's heart, which has greater strength the longer a man remains himself. . . ."

Suleiman leans back and reaches up to take down the chungur from the post. It is of dark cherry wood, and its colour is something like the colour of Suleiman's hands. With a customary gesture he takes it in the curve of his arms. The three-cornered amulets tinkle on the

long neck. The bowl of it is light and rounded like a bird's nest.

He touches it delicately with his fingers. The strings vibrate.

("Is it thou?" they seem to ask drowsily. . . . "We have waited long for thy touch Suleiman!")

The poet raises it to the level of his breast and, as though glancing into its face, knits his brows alertly. The amulets quiver on the neck; the chungur waits. Then he grasps all the strings at once. . . .

This melody breathes a strange, old thought that envelops the soul. The strings sing strongly sometimes, arousing courage and cheering pride in the heart; sometimes they sing dully or faintly and then you languish with the inner sadness which has stirred you from childhood and swallows up all you have gone through. The house is filled with restlessly circling flocks of birds. The birds perch on my shoulders, take wing, then circle again, flashing through the air. They alight, swinging on the lamp shade, watching from there with their black beady eyes. Their plumage is not of this country. They set up an alarmed twittering, and, obedient to Suleiman's hand, are drawn towards him through storm and deluge from warmer climes.

. . . Once again I see the distant clouds. The wind from the mountain tops chills my face. The sun is rising in the smoky dawn, and over it, neck outstretched, sails the white-horned gazelle of my childhood. . . .

A long time ago my mother took me with her to a high far-off mountain. It is called the Tall Mountain, and is many miles from the village. At the summit there is a chalk layer, where the whole village gets its chalk to whitewash the houses. It is not an easy job, and people take turns to go there once every two or three years. . . .

We had started the evening before. The ass with the empty panniers at its sides minced along ahead of us. My mother hurried on. By morning we were at the summit. And here, at daybreak, I decided to explore the mountain, so while my mother was collecting the lumps of chalk, I set out up the other slope.

The mountain top was covered with scrub. I lost my way, I was waist-deep in grass. Tall yellow flowers with thin stalks grew among the grass. Their corollas were star-shaped and brimming with dew. They were very still, and even the fresh breeze hardly stirred them on their thin stems. I climbed higher and higher. All of a sudden something started up before me and then stood stock still. A gazelle was grazing there. Startled at seeing me, it stood like stone. We were face to face. To this day I can see the long reddish neck, the frightened eyes, with their violet glint, the dilated nostrils. This lasted perhaps an instant. The gazelle started, tore itself from the spot and flew upwards. Taken by surprise, it did not calculate the leap and the sight I saw was amazing. The gazelle had dashed towards the side where the chasm yawned. The giant piled rocks descended like a stairway and broke off sheer. They were veiled in blue mist. Stunned with horror, I stood there, only realizing now the dizzy height I had reached. The round sun was rising through the smoke from below. It was crimson, and the clouds on the distant peaks looked red at one side, while above they foamed grey like the surging tide. Around me everything floated, the mountain alone stood firm. . . . The yellow flowers, the tall green grass, the sun rising from below and the gazelle. . . . Had the wild thing taken that morning for a dream, as I had? And might that be why it had not calculated the leap, and thought to fly across the sun?. . .

. . . Suleiman plays the introductory phrases (he always improvises, tuning his instrument to his thoughts). He gazes past me with those aloof, unseeing eyes and once more it occurs to me that I am on the threshold of the poet's mystery.

Is this, perhaps, how his song begins? Is it not from childhood, from the twittering of the birds, from the dew-filled star-shaped flowers of the peaks? I hear again my mother's voice, calling me from somewhere down below, and I see the ass with the drooping ears, now weighed down with panniers filled with white stones.

Suleiman breaks off the melody suddenly (the gazelle, head held high as in a fairy tale, has leapt across the dawn.) The poet's face is calm. He is going to tell me something, and, laying the chungur on his knees, sits blinking heavily and staring at me.

At that moment the old woman enters the room. She is wearing a loose cashmere gown and she carries the "Bat" hurricane lantern.

"Where are you going?" Suleiman asks her.

"The young ox has wandered away. It's not to be seen on the waste ground. The rope was left dangling on the old plough he was tied to. . . . I don't know where to look for him, I'm sure . . ." the old woman says.

Suleiman ponders for a moment, then suddenly scowls at her.

"Now here," he says, placing his outspread hand on the breast pocket of his Caucasian coat, then makes a gesture of exasperation. "Here's a guest come to see me. This is the fourth time that Habib has asked me to make up a song about myself. I'm thinking, thinking till my head goes round and here you come with your young ox! Devil take him! He's grown big, come to his strength and, of course, he's broken away. What's that got to do with me? And you come talking about the waste ground and the rotten rope and all the rest of it. . . Can't you see, woman, that I've something better to do just now!"

The woman retreats, staring at him in bewilderment, and goes out without shutting the door after her. The white cat glances in from the verandah. Suleiman breaks off a bit of bread, and, dipping it in honey, throws it to her on the threshold.

"Go along, poor creature," he says tenderly, "have a bit of bread and honey like at a wedding!"

I can see the old woman through the open doorway. She is at some distance, but when our glances meet, her face lights up with a good-natured smile. Her nod and gesture imply surprise, as much as to say: "What's up with our old man today?" then she closes the door softly and we are alone once more.

Suleiman sits with the chungur resting on his knees; he gazes pensively past me. The

chungur is upright and the poet's hand on the neck holds the instrument almost on a level with his face. His expression is grave. On the wall opposite hangs the portrait of Lenin and Stalin—the one where they are taken together; Lenin is seated in an armchair, his hands folded, as though he were preparing to listen to Suleiman of whom he and Stalin have just been talking. Lenin and Stalin are sitting under trees, perhaps in a garden, and this garden, alive with birds and sunshine, surrounds Suleiman's house.

The poet looks straight before him. His gaze is concentrated, full of thought—across it light shadows pass—and this time, I will at last call it inspired.

After a while he repeats the song over and over to himself. Not until much later does he sing it aloud, and even then he does not sing it to me but to his home, his village, his land and the stars of the cloudless night sky, visible through the window. (They are the big stars of springtime, and they seem to twinkle at the poet as though they understood him.)

I sat silent. Then I experienced a vague feeling that settled in my breast, weighing on the soul like those ghosts of wreathing mist that wandered in the hollows of the gardens in autumn (when the poet slept, leaning against the old derelict wooden plough on the waste ground), and again the feeling arose in tumult like the thunderstorm, and sang like the orchards and gardens, a many-voiced organ (that was at the height of summer), or glowed in the heart like the warm flame in Suleiman's hands in the cold, blue winter night.

No, I cannot remember now the words of the song, but I wrote down the sense of it as briefly as I could. . . .

This is it:

Oh, people! Once there lived an old man and his wife on the shore of the deep blue sea. He was poor, he was the poorest of all the labourers in the village and he lived at the very bottom of it, down by the roadside, as a dog lives in the hole under the steps of a house.

No, no, this man was not a poet!

A song comes from far, far away. The purity of youth must flow in its blood or else it will fall to the ground, ere it can take the first few steps. The old man was old and in his declining years he had grown feeble. For instead of the bright days that leave a memory to illumine the way of old age, his youth had left him only a hundred and forty wrongs, and those wrongs had seethed and hardened on his heart like stone. They no longer stirred but they troubled him. The dark stone weighed his body to the earth, for it was very heavy and lay close on his heart. . . .

Oh people, this old man was not a poet! Bowed by want and grief, eternally seeking happiness and never finding it, feeble and unable to understand much that was going on in this dark world—the old man was only the hundred and forty-first unfortunate in his native village. . . . The tongue that repeats the word "Bread, bread, bread!" cannot sing. And the chill, dark melancholy, that foreshadows death overwhelmed the poor old man.

The days went by. One after the other, each resembling the other, they dragged wearily on, until at long last something happened.

The dark world grew lighter.

One morning the old man rose and wondered at his life. Here was his old wife dressed in cashmere instead of the poorest cotton. His sons were wearing caps of white lambskin. He himself was wearing soft, new boots instead of the old rusty-brown sandals stuffed with hay.

"What can have happened?" the old man wondered to himself. His house, his yard and garden—all stood facing him as much as to say "Good morning!" The village, formerly high and shut in, seemed to have spread and the old man's house was now in the heart of it. How did that come about? How was it that he who lived on the outskirts, felt at home here, the head, the first man of the village? Why was this and that within his reach now, and the people he saw were only too glad to talk to him? Why did the stone no longer weigh on his heart?—The stone that had crushed his every impulse all his life. It was not there; and in the spot where it had lain, as in a cradle, a tiny wordless joy lay now. With every beat of the heart the cradle rocked. The infant joy grew apace. . . .

The old man was thinking of the fairy tale that told of the fisherman who caught a golden fish of Hindustan, and he glanced round him. But he was not a fisherman. And besides, others had grown rich with him—his friends, who had toiled without end as labourers; in what sea, in what tale could one find, young man, so many golden fish?. . .

No, it was not a dream, it was real. Putting on his clothes, he took his staff and set out with quiet cautious tread.

He entered his garden. It spread before him all in rosy apple blossom. The steps, the windowsills were touched with rose colour like the dawn and now for the first time the old man saw the springtime face to face.

Rose-coloured smoke floated past him from the trees.

The old man looked up through narrowed eyelids at the sun. The birds were singing. From somewhere down below in the ravine the babbling of a brook came to his ears, and last year's leaves smelt of earth newly awakened by the sun.

It was all as it had always been. . . But why had the world suddenly acquired a meaning? Why were the moist branches of the trees so good and so sparkling? Why was the mist so beautiful? Even the mountains, the mountains that had oppressed him from childhood, why were they so gentle all of a sudden?

Oh, my country! Oh, my Bagdad!

The old man rubbed his eyes. And he remembered now that the world had undergone a change with the name Lenin-Stalin—this was one name and it stood for homeland, long lost by men. It arose of itself in his heart. It was the first word uttered by the child still in its cradle and the old man pressed his hand to his breast. The word had not fallen on stony ground. It was taken up by all living creatures and, once pronounced, it swelled until it filled the whole world. It sounded in the chirping of the birds, floated in the smoky sunrise, was borne away by the brook which reflected in its sparkle a glory like the sun. . . .

Greetings, my country!

The old man remembered then that this name had always been present in his finest thoughts.... When was that? Ever since his youth?

From far, far away his youth responded to his thought and he stood with his hand pressed against his breast, listening to the singing of his strength, returning to him now from beyond the horizon, where youth lay. It was coming and bringing with it the jewel words of song and now for the first time the old man felt that he was a poet....

And the feeling had the flavour of the quince that his mother had held to his childish lips to bite. (His stepmother had been a wicked woman; his own unfortunate mother had only been able to see her son in secret.) Why was it that he saw his mother's face so clearly now?... This fleeting happiness of an unforeseen meeting with his only kindred on earth—why had the recollection suddenly come to his mind, and, an old man now, he had felt the taste of the quince eaten in childhood on his lips today?...

It might be that the tree on which the happiness of his childhood had grown, had drawn its moisture from this same brook?... It was but a narrow brook, bearing on its bosom a solitary small happiness from out of the past to flow into the broad, fathomless sea of today....

The garden spread along the mountain slope. The old man stood staring at the brook and biting his lip to keep back the tears....

And many, many things came back to his mind. He had lived in the world for sixty years. All his life passed before his mind's eye and each of those sixty years gave the best that was in it for a song about Lenin-Stalin. There were fields with ripening grain, and rivers in spate and lofty peaks; there were fine deeds done by friends and thoughts of the people—and all, all that had been experienced, seen and heard by this man in his sixty years, all that was worthy of song.

The old man roamed in the garden....

He scrutinized the past as men scrutinize grain in autumn, holding it in the hollow of their hands and rolling it between their thumbs.

He sat by the brook, breathing in the fragrance of spring and feeling his blood grow younger with song....

And so he sat till eventide.... And so he became a poet.

Greetings to thee, sunset-lit mountain, and the house at its foot!

Greetings to the golden, humming bees of my country!...

Greetings, sunshine!

I have gained all these and I will yield them to no one, today and forevermore!

I am yours.

You are mine....

Translated by Hilda Kazanina

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SERGEI KRUSHINSKY

A VISIT TO THE OLD HOME

Nikolai Pavlovich's home on Arbat consists of rooms filled with bookshelves, dark and cramped as cells.

Nikolai Pavlovich's friends know that despite his services to science and his country, despite his obstinate, capricious character, he is somewhat afraid of his daughter Mashenka.

The more frequent visitors, however, know that in important cases, no arguments will move him, once he has made up his mind. On these occasions he is gruff and stern to the point of unfairness; this is his way of warding off Mashenka's objections. When his daughter sees this change, she is often able to guess beforehand that her father is "up to something", as she—the only person in all the world—permits herself to say of the highly-respected scientist.

And so, she was able to sense the approach of this particular step Nikolai Pavlovich was preparing. At breakfast, Mashenka told him that she would like to buy some sort of live pet for his grandchildren, even if it were something out of a terrarium, since it was important for children's education that they should have something living to stroke and caress, to hold in their hands; as she said it, she gave him that mild, tender look that always found its way to her father's heart. But Nikolai Pavlovich's reply was sharp and cold.

"Yes, my dear, that's just the very thing, the inmate of a terrarium! A snake, for instance is a most affectionate pet. Buy a hedgehog as well, that's another fine thing for them to hold and stroke!"

After that little scene Mashenka was not in the least surprised when Nikolai Pavlovich expressed his intention of going to visit his birthplace. She was already expecting "some such stunt" from him.

"And your poor health?" asked Mashenka.

"What of my poor health? Obviously, I take it with me. It doesn't want to desert me here either, as you can see!"

"But think, to take such a journey with your catarrh. . . And they say there are no houses there? Though I can see it's no use arguing with you. You don't care about anything. Your fancies. . . ."

The outcome was that the next morning, Nikolai Pavlovich added to the housekeeping money a sum sufficient to buy "live pets", and accompanied by his devoted secretary, took the westbound express.

The railway journey passed without any particular incident or discomfort. Everything had been excellently arranged. It was not for nothing that Nikolai Pavlovich so highly valued his secretary Venyamin Pavlovich, who had a reasonably good understanding even of the most complicated researches on which his chief was working.

At a small station beyond Smolensk, very well known to Nikolai Pavlovich, he was met by an old-fashioned spring cart drawn by a pair of unmatched horses. Although Nikolai Pavlovich had known this station well he couldn't recognize it. Before him stretched an empty space criss-crossed with railway lines, there were several dugouts on one side, with the top of the carriage rising above them.

The sleepy driver thought that the visitors would go to the district administration, where as he knew, something had been prepared for them. But Nikolai Pavlovich declared gruffly that he wished to go to the experimental station right away.

At last the driver untangled the reins and clucked to his unmatched horses with an injured expression that seemed to answer for the team as well as for himself.

Scorched earth extended about them.

"They wrote that at least the chimneys had been left after the fires," said Nikolai Pavlovich mildly.

"So they had," the driver replied laconically. "But they're not any more. The bricks were taken for the dugouts. People have got to live!"

"That's true—people have got to live!" Nikolai Pavlovich agreed, and for a long time remained silent.

The sun moved across its azure dome and began to sink. A light breeze sprang up, dispelling the heat. The ancient equippage rolled unwillingly along the neglected, weed-grown road. The driver was telling about how poor the district had become, how the Germans had swept it bare, how on special occasions the administration borrowed this spring cart from neighbours twenty versts away, so that it had been nicknamed the "interdistrict carriage" — but Nikolai Pavlovich said nothing. A tear would fall from his old eye and dry in the wind, to be followed by another, which dried in its turn. . . .

He was engrossed in his thoughts. Dust and ashes! Where were they now, those years of intense work, years of youthful enthusiasm? Not a trace of them remained. Dust and ashes! What was left of all those years of struggle against rust on the flax plants, those yellow patches like ulcers on the flowering blue fields? It had been necessary to convince the peasants that they did not arise from "tired soil", but from a pest living in the fields, and to teach them how to fight it, to guide them, and carry on that endless grinding selection work. He thought he had won the battle. He had made the whole district famous. A preserve for seed flax! Excursions from scientific institutes, respectful letters from collective farmers! . . And now it was

all—dust and ashes! Before him stretched the weed-grown, dreary land.

On the site of the experimental station buildings, where he had spent his best years, Nikolai Pavlovich saw piles of gleaming yellow bricks and instead of the experimental plots, there were graves. . . .

"Perhaps I really shouldn't have come here!" thought Nikolai Pavlovich and he remembered Mashenka. And as though justifying himself in his own eyes, he said:

"After all, it was here I left my youth, Venyamin Pavlovich! I am a self-educated man. I was nearly forty when I finished the Academy. And I had to learn it all by myself. Sometimes I'd have to run from the station to Zaovrazhye. In thin boots! And in a hard frost. And didn't know my lectures any too well... I'll tell you, once I sat down right there in the snow, pulled my legs up and started preparing for my lecture so that the peasants shouldn't notice my ignorance. . . ."

Nikolai Pavlovich's eyes were burning with bitter grief that was also reflected in the eyes of Venyamin Pavlovich. He was very like his chief. He had the same, or nearly the same, square-cut beard and almost the same straight parting in his thinning hair. Wags used to say that as the years passed by, the two men's features took on an amazing likeness. But, they would add in a whisper, it was not difficult to see which was the original and which the copy.

In place of the former Zaovrazhye streets, with their spacious yards and houses with weathercocks on the roofs, Nikolai Pavlovich saw a row of dugouts, with an occasional new log house, shaggy with moss hanging from the joints.

Nikolai Pavlovich went down into one of the dugouts, his secretary supporting his elbow. It was empty, but the neighbours had already sent for its owner. Through the tiny window, Nikolai Pavlovich could watch the dying day. Gold had already given place to lilac, lilac to deep crimson. New bands of deep purple barred the horizon in even rows, as though some giant had been ploughing the heavens.

An old man with a shaven chin yellow with age came down the steps on crutches and began fussing about his guests, lighted a lamp, made a fire in the tiny iron stove and put a panful of water on it to make tea. These were old acquaintances, and they were almost intoxicated with excitement at the meeting.

"We're getting grey, old friend. How much older are you than I?" Nikolai Pavlovich asked the old man, who had been one of his experimental workers.

"About five years, no more," the latter replied not without a certain swagger. "But as for getting grey—that's a fact. Age doesn't add to your looks!"

"Yes, yes, you're right, Naum Naumych, it doesn't! No, but how did you manage to survive, old friend? All that's happened in these parts, it's terrible even to look at it—terrible! I've read about it. So many of the people here were heroes. And it looks as though you're one of them!" Nikolai Pavlovich glanced at the crutches. "Did you bring in many 'tongues'?[1] Did you go out on long patrols?"

Naum Naumych seated himself beside his friend on a tree stump with the roots still projecting, and replied slowly and respectfully:

"No, Nikolushka, I haven't much to boast of there! It was sort of neither one thing nor the other with me. I went through a lot of trouble and grief, but not near so much as others."

"We've known each other thirty years now," said Nikolai Pavlovich. "Remember the first years after the Revolution? Remember how we thought to build castles, how they all had to have big windows and be all five stories high? Like a couple of children, we were... And see the way life's turned everything upside down! I suppose all my flax is lost?"

"Yes, it's gone. Maybe some collective farms have kept some of the selected seed, but there's not much of it. There was no chance to think of that. It was all so hard . . . better not to remember it. I tried myself to save your wheat!"

"You tried, all the same?"

"Of course, I did! Do you remember the time I came to Moscow, you poured me out a whole capful—quick ripening, drought-resisting seed. With the weather we've got now we'd have nothing to worry about with that."

Nikolai Pavlovich recalled his unfinished experiment with a new sort of wheat. He had worked on it between times, as a sideline, for his main interest had always been flax. But nevertheless, he really had already been on the verge of getting somewhere.

"Selection in the hands of an agronomist is like reins in the hands of a driver," he began enthusiastically.

"Nikolai Pavlovich means . . ." the secretary started to echo him, but the chief stopped him.

"Well, and so I suppose all my quick-ripening grain's lost?" asked the scientist, turning to the old man.

"Yes," sighed Naum Naumych. "In '41, when the Germans were here already, we threshed a whole barn of it. And they came waving their revolvers, give it up! We tried to tell them what it was, but they wouldn't believe a word of it."

"Wouldn't believe a word of it?" asked Nikolai Pavlovich. When he listened to Naum Naumych, something far distant, something of his childhood rose before him.

"Not for anything, they wouldn't! They would have it their own way—we'd hidden grain for the partisans, and they told us to take it to the elevator. The last grain of it! Well, and what could we do? I was afraid, but it's a hard thing to throw away what's got happiness for the people in it, throw it away with my own hands. I filled a sack and carried it to the forest on my back, and then another. Because you see, some swine had denounced us! So I saw things were bad, and I thought, best thing to get away. I

[1] Prisoners captured for information purposes.

thought they'd give up after that. But they didn't. No! They came in the night, and surrounded my cottage, and piled straw round it, and in that one night, Nikolushka, I lost all my family."

There was a long silence.

"I couldn't look after your grain the way it should have been done," Naum Naumych continued, when his emotion allowed him to speak. "I must ask you to excuse me."

"Now, now, there's no need for that," Nikolai Pavlovich hastened to comfort him. "We've all got something to be excused by somebody, and see what you did? You couldn't have done any more!"

"But all the same, I tried," Naum Naumych continued his melancholy tale. "I took the wheat to the partisan store. They carried it about with them and guarded it like they did their munitions, and to tell you the truth, even more than that—we took care of it better than of any shells. Because we used to say: 'These sacks hold our future wealth, they've got our science and Nikolai Pavlovich's sleepless nights packed in them.'"

"Now, now, that's enough, Naum Naumych," protested the aged scientist almost pathetically. "What's my work! When there was the blood of the people flowing. . . ."

"Yes . . . flowing, that's a true word. . . We carried it about with us, your grain, but then I noticed that something was wrong. And when I looked I saw that it was losing its vitality! And the Germans sat tight, they didn't go. What could I do? I made up my mind to rejuvenate the grain. I planted it."

"Planted it? But where, may I ask?"

"In the forest. Not far from our headquarters I planted it and put a fence round it. The soil was no good at all, so we manured it, gave it a real good dressing! We began calling it our suburban farm. We weeded it. . . But then see what bad luck we had—it was just shooting up, and all of a sudden there were the Germans, attacking. We fought and fought, but we couldn't keep them back! So we had to go. And they, the black devils, they must go and set up a post right in our old camp. They'd burned the villages, so they settled down in our dugouts. Lived there snug as a bug in a rug. But the wheat was ripening! Well, what could I do? I was worried to death. Couldn't swallow a bite. When I saw people reaping anywhere, my knees bent under me! So I said goodbye to my friends and went to try and save it."

"That was a crazy risk to take!" Nikolai Pavlovich scolded him.

At this moment the pan began to bubble. Naum Naumych expertly lifted it with his crutch and took it off the fire, sighed as he stood by the stove, and returned to his place.

"I won't tell you a lie, Nikolushka, I was frightened all right," he said. "But don't you understand, this grain—it was all that was left of everything I'd been proud of. Everything else was gone, but that was still there. And I'd been thinking, that when the big day came I'd have that wheat to bring to our people, since I hadn't enough skill for military exploits! Well, I took sacks and went along by secret paths till I got right into the Germans' den. I crawled up to my wheat, and rubbed a handful of ears in my hands—they were still green. I'd sown late, and it wasn't quite ready. But I had to get it away. They'd begun cutting it for feed for their horses. So I began pulling it up. I pulled and pulled at the ears, and I felt as happy as a bird. It was getting near morning, time to stop, but I kept on pulling. And it's the truth, Nikolushka, I got all that they hadn't yet been able to cut or trample down."

"You really got it?"

"Yes, I got it. . . But I got punished for stopping so long. They saw me! And they started firing. I bolted into the bushes with my sack and ran. And they'd got a machine gun going—regular military operations, eh? I got away. But I left a trail of blood behind me. Don't scold me, Nikolai Pavlovich, I've scolded myself enough! I shouldn't have touched it. Two days later the devils went away. And then we could have got the wheat, ear by ear in peace, and ripe too! I'd taken it off the root too early, and it began to shrivel."

Nikolai Pavlovich shook his head nervously, jumped up and began to pace the dugout. At first he had recalled his "drought-resisting, quick-ripening" grain without any particular feeling. But as Naum Naumych told his artless tale, every grain became dearer and dearer to the scientist, until now he felt that he himself would have been capable of carrying away the ears under fire.

"We celebrated the victory," continued Naum Naumych, "and then we all went about our own business. And so did I. I planted the drought-resisting grain the first time, but I only got scattered ears. Now I've planted it for the second time. It's better. But it's still not all it ought to be. . . How shall I put it, Nikolai Pavlovich, you know how it is like with a seven months' baby. . . Well, and now shall we have tea, Nikolai Pavlovich, and then go and inspect the grain!" he ended.

"Of course! Most certainly! And let's go at once, please, we can have tea later," said Nikolai Pavlovich quickly, and all three left the dugout.

Nikolai Pavlovich was a man who did not love flowery speech. But on the way he said:

"See how I'd got it all wrong! I thought everything had gone to rack and ruin! But it's not all gone, not by a long way! The castles we've built can never be destroyed! The castles are the people we've become, that's our greatest achievement!

"We value the public wealth above our own lives. And with all that, how can we now fail to make our own lives beautiful, swiftly and surely?"

A new day was being born out of the darkness of night. The sky, a moment before merging with the low grey clouds, was gradually rising, blue and lofty: life filled those clouds, and like white, golden-winged swans they floated majestically through the infinite space.

Three men were hastening to a tiny plot of wheat whose ears gleamed white before them.

Translated by Eve Manning

IVAN MENSHIKOV

DANKO

Sema Laptander, a Nenets boy with high cheekbones and black eyes, had two things in the world to make him really happy—blind Granny Nyarkoné's stories, and walrus tusks out of which one could carve so many delightful things that it made the world a much more interesting place to live in.

The Russian teacher, Tonya Kovylyova liked stories too. Sema Laptander's friends had told him about it. After the illiterates' lessons were over in the school tent, the teacher would collect the children by the paraffin lamp and tell them endless stories. Only it seemed to Sema that she must have a very bad memory, for she could only tell them by looking in a book. And she actually told them, instead of singing them like Granny Nyarkoné.

Sema was only twelve, and in the whole of his life he had only learned three letters.

But Sema liked stories.

After lessons were over, he and his friends went to the Russian teacher, and seating themselves on the floor, announced seriously and with dignity:

"We have come to listen to a story. Tell us one."

"Very well," the teacher said.

She put on the gramophone for them, showed them the radio and when it was quite dark and the tent was warm with the breath of the children who had come to hear stories, she took up a book and sat down on the bed which served her for bench, armchair and chair.

She sat on the bed and began a story.

This was a story which so transformed the whole world for little Sema that he even gasped with excitement and his protruding ears became hot and pink.

His eyes fixed unwinkingly on the teacher, holding his breath for fear of losing a single word, Sema listened to the story, and in his imagination he was no longer the little shepherd Sema, but the proud and gallant hero of the wonderful tale. Together with him, Sema trod the path through darkness and sorrow, and unchildlike tears pricked his eyes.

The Russian teacher read on in a quiet, sad voice, and the further she read, the more musical and sad it became till it was almost like a song.

"And still the forest chanted its lugubrious dirge, and still the thunder roared and the rain rattled.

" 'What shall I do for mankind?' cried Danko in a voice that rang louder than the thunder.

"And the next moment he had rent open his chest with his two hands, torn out his heart, and stood holding it high up over his head.

"And the flaming heart blazed with a light more dazzling than that of the sun. Then all the forest depths, illumined by this torch of supreme love for Man grew silent. The shadows fled trembling before this Aurora, driven into the far corners of the forest, into the jaws of the poisonous swamp. The men stood dumb with astonishment as if turned to stone.

"'Forward!' cried Danko, rushing onward as he held aloft his flaming heart to light the road.

"They threw themselves after him, full of ecstasy and wonder. The trees shook their leafy summits in astonishment, and again the forest became full of sound, but now it was covered by that of the tramping of the men's feet. They marched along inspired with courage, led on by the marvellous spectacle of the flaming heart. True, some of them still fell by the way, but they succumbed without a cry or a murmur.

"And Danko still led them on, his heart still flaming overhead. And suddenly the forest in front opened. Mute and impenetrable it now lay at last behind them. Danko and his companions found themselves plunging all at once into a vast sea of light and pure air, washed by the rain. The storm still hung over the forest, but here around them was the warm light of the sun, the sighing of the steppe, the grass sprinkled with bright diamonds of rain, while the river sparkled like gold as it glided along. It was evening, and as the rays of the setting sun fell on the water, it ran crimson, like the blood that flowed from Danko's gaping chest.

"The dying Danko, proud and fearless, cast a look of joy before him over the immensity of the steppe—over that land of liberty that rolled away on either side; then with one last proud smile, he fell and breathed his last.

"The wondering trees looking on from behind whispered softly among themselves, and the grass, wet with Danko's blood, made answer to them.

"And the people, full of joy and hope, did not even notice that their leader was dead, they did not see that his proud heart was still burning brightly beside his body. One man alone, perceiving this, and seized with some feeling of fear, put his foot on the proud heart. The flame broke into a shower of sparks and went out!"[1]

"And that's the end of the story, children," said the teacher, and stopped, surprised at the expression on the small faces, and the grief that dimmed the eyes of Sema, the youngest of them all.

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[1] From Maxim Gorky's story *Old Isergyl*.

"Why, you're not crying, are you?" and there was a smile in her tired grey eyes.

"We feel bad about it," said Sema Laptander, and there was a long silence in the school tent.

The children were thinking. And in those moments of melancholy silence they felt as though Danko were coming from far, far away, raising his flaming heart, like a torch. He walked on, lighting up the earth, and the people weeping with happiness, followed him. "And who knows," thought Sema Laptander, "the sun, maybe that's the flaming heart of Danko, although the story does not sing about that."

He looked through the celluloid window of the school tent. A sunray played on the tip of his freckled nose, and Sema screwed up his eyes. He screwed up his eyes and turned to his comrades. The sunray penetrated his broad ears, turning them a tender pink.

Sema opened his eyes, and jerked his head towards the sun.

"That's the flaming heart of Danko!" he said with conviction. "See how it flames over the earth!"

Then turning to the Russian teacher, he asked:

"Sing us another story by that man."

The teacher shook her head, and told him that this was the only story by Gorky translated into Nenets, that there were lessons tomorrow and that she had to sleep.

"That is a pity," said Sema. "We're very sorry that there aren't any more stories like that. If I was big, I'd go to him myself and get them."

"You don't need to go," said the teacher. "If you write him a nice letter, he'll send you a whole *argish*[1] of stories himself, Sema."

Faint lines appeared on Sema Laptander's brow. He smiled, but the next moment his face was downcast and sad.

"I know only three letters, Teacher," he said despondently. "I know lots of things, but it's hard for me to write letters."

Sema Laptander thought hard, looked at the sun again, and felt very sad.

He rose and went to the exit, turned back and looked at his comrades, and then said with unexpected conviction:

"But I'll write him that letter all the same. I'll write it my own way, with my own hands."

"I can help you," said the teacher.

The boy smiled condescendingly.

"No," he said, "you can't help me, Khabenya[2]. I would like you to help me very much, but nobody can help me to do this. . ." And he left the school tent.

Ilko Laptander, Sema's father, returned from his spell of duty at dawn. Sema was sleeping on the skins, his arms flung wide, muttering in his sleep. Ilko bent over him, looking tenderly at the freckled face, the hands still unroughened by work, the full lips moist with sleep.

"Wake up," he said, gently touching his son's shoulder with his knotted, stiff fingers. "Wake up, Sonny, the sun is high."

The boy rose hastily and looked with reddened eyes at the skin thrown back from the entrance. He saw the sun.

"That—that's the flaming heart of Danko," he said softly, and lay down again to sleep.

"Get up, lazybones," laughed Ilko, "been listening to stories again."

"And you—you're the dark night," said Sema, drowsily, half asleep again. "You should be taken out into the steppe to see the sun."

"How d'ye like that!" said Ilko Laptander, taken aback, then calming himself with the thought that he could understand nothing of what the boy meant anyway, he drank some warm tea and also lay down to sleep.

He was wakened by the dry sound of a small saw. He rose, and looked at his son in surprise. Sema was sawing a large walrus tusk in half.

"Making toys," Ilko said to himself and a proud smile hovered for a long time about his lips.

Who in the camp could compete with his son's skill! Out of a bone Sema could carve a man so finely that even a child could say what that man was thinking, what he was doing. Once he had taken the root of a tundra birch, and carved a clownish figure with a shaman's drum; and as soon as the shepherds saw the face, all of them cried: "That's Khalimanko!"

When the news of this reached Khalimanko, the black shaman from the river Neruty, the strongest and most malicious shaman throughout the Lesser and Greater Tundras, he came himself to Ilka Laptander in the camp. He took in the clown with his uncanny eyes and told Ilka:

"Your son must be strangled. He is evil. He laughs at older people, at me." And Khalimanko threw the wooden clown into the fire.

"Sema's evidently got some idea in his head again. Well, let him make what he wants. It doesn't do harm to anybody, and it makes the boy happy," thought Ilka. "If he's always busy with something the boy'll learn to like work and grow up a good reindeer herdsman." And Ilka procured a small drill, hammer and chisel for his son, so that the lad might not be hampered by lack of tools.

"Work away," he said. "Only don't be in too great a hurry. Don't ever try to hurry over a thing, and you'll live longer." And after having breakfast, he went back to the herd—he was the collective farm brigade leader and responsible for it.

When he had finished cutting the tusk lengthways, Sema went to the Russian teacher. He found her drinking tea.

"Will you have some tea?" she asked.

"Please," said Sema, and began sipping it.

After drinking three cupfuls, he suddenly asked:

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[1] *Argish*—a team of reindeer consisting of several pairs.

[2] Khabenya—Russian woman, a form of address.

"But is he kind?"

"Whom do you mean?" asked the teacher surprised.

"That one that made up that story."

"Ah, Gorky," laughed the girl. "He's very kind. He likes snub noses like you. He knows a whole crowd of them." [1] She opened the cupboard and took out a bundle of magazines with pictures of Maxim Gorky.

"Thank you," said Sema. "Thank you very much. I'll look at them and then I'll give them back to you. Only don't call me a snub nose," he added, "I'm too grown up, I'm twelve already."

He thanked the teacher again, and went back to his tent with the magazines under his arm.

He spent a long time looking at the pictures, which showed a tall, thin man. The story teller who had written the tale of Danko had a long, benevolent-looking moustache, a thin wrinkled face and eyes like Granny Nyarkoné—slightly touched with sorrow and weariness.

There were many of these portraits, but the one he liked best was that in which the story teller was walking in the hills, wearing a broad-brimmed hat and a short cloak. The story teller stood on a height, tall, frowning a little, looking straight at Sema with kindly, understanding eyes, against a background of the tender blueish mists of some southern country.

Sema gazed at the portrait for nearly an hour, studied it, and when he had taken everything in, his lids dropped.

A dream, like a fairy tale, took his little heart under its sway. He opened his eyes and hastily seized a piece of tusk. As though fearful of losing the vision, he began working the bone with chisel and knife, drill and file. The sun had long since sunk beyond the mountains of Pai-Khoya, his father had long since returned from work, but still he sat and filed, fearing of forgetting the miraculous picture that filled his mind. His legs were numb with the tension, his back ached, his eyes swam, but Sema did not stop working. It was only when the sun once more peeped into the tent that he remembered his father's advice.

Putting the half-carved tusk carefully away, Sema ate some cold meat and lay down to sleep.

Even in his dreams, however, the miraculous vision pursued him. His face, at first calm, became tense, excited, happy.

. . . From the distant forests he saw a light sledge drawn by three white reindeer racing towards the camp, and sitting on it was the man in the broad-brimmed hat and the short cloak. From beneath his grey, rather fierce-looking brows, kindly blue eyes took in the tundra and smiled at Sema who was running to meet him.

"How do you do, Sema, snub nose!" he called in the voice of Danko.

"I'm not a snub nose at all," Sema replied, surprised to find himself not at all offended at being called "snub nose".

"Here I am, come to pay you a visit. I wanted to see how you live, and how you study."

"And I was wanting to make you a letter," Sema replied. "But I only know three letters yet. When they gather in the children for the school in the autumn, then I'll go too."

"You must certainly go," said Gorky. "Look how many stories I've brought you!"

Then Sema saw that there was a pile of books on Gorky's knees, and behind him on the sledge there were so many more that you couldn't read them in years.

Gorky smiled and said with concern, in a slightly rasping voice:

"But how will you read them when you know only three letters?"

"That's true," said Sema, "three letters are not enough. . . Our teacher's very kind, but she's got a lot of work, she hasn't time to read stories all the time, she has to sleep too."

"That's true, that's true," said Gorky.

Then suddenly a big black cloud, as black as black could be, swallowed him up together with the sledge, and Sema screamed in fear. He screamed and cried, but Gorky raised the tale of Danko's flaming heart above his head, and immediately the cloud disappeared. He held it high over the earth, and it shone like the July sun, so blindingly bright that it hurt the eyes.

"Foolish Sema," said Gorky, smiling, "what are you afraid of? See, the sun's shining. . . ."

Sema opened his eyes and looked up in some confusion. His father was bending over him, laughing and pointing to the sun.

"Silly boy," he said. "Were you frightened?"

"Who's there for me to be frightened of?" Sema replied angrily. "I'm not a kid, I don't get scared."

After a good dinner, Sema once more set to work.

He carefully cut out the runners of the sledge. He harnessed three white reindeer to it and polished off their horns with delicate touches of his file. He thought for a long time whether he should leave the horns. Reindeer shed them in spring, and when Gorky got his letter, he would think: "This Sema's a bad herdsman—spring, and he's left the horns on."

Sema thought for a long time. He felt sorry to deprive the reindeer of their horns. He had worked so hard, carving and filing them, but truth comes first! And with an aching heart Sema filed one horn off each reindeer.

"It may not look so nice, but it's true," he thought, and began to carve the man sitting on the sledge. He made a broad-brimmed hat and a short cloak; he fashioned a long, fierce but kindly moustache and lines on the clear, open brow.

It was only the eyes that he could not get right.

For a long time he leafed through the magazines, and finally a happy thought struck

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[1] Maxim Gorky once edited a book written by children in a home for orphans which bore the title "The Snub Nose School."

him. He made the eyes as he had seen them in his dream—with a sly, welcoming twinkle.

Three days passed before those eyes began to shine with wisdom, kindliness and tenderness.

Now there was very little left to do—a pile of books on the knees, another in the back of the sledge, and in the right hand the most important book of all—the story of Danko's flaming heart.

Tongue thrust out, holding his breath, Sema carved the books. Then he looked at his work for a long time, and realized sadly that the man was lifeless and the reindeer were not running.

After resting and sleeping, he once more took up his carving. He made slight changes in the man's body and the reindeer's legs, he traced two melancholy lines by the man's mouth and looked proudly at his "letter."

But how was the wonderful storyteller to understand that it was he, Sema, who wanted books?

Sema swiftly solved the riddle. At the other end of the tusk he carved a tent, a sledge, two small reindeer and a dog. He even carved out poles beside the sledge. He made a whip with a bit of whalebone and hung it in front of the sledge. And then, in front of it all, he carefully carved out his own figure. He wanted to make his nose straight, but he remembered that it must be true and gave himself a snub nose.

But when he looked at it all, Sema realized with grief that Gorky, with his friendly, glad smile racing at full speed on his sledge, was being met by a little man with a calmly expectant, almost indifferent look on his face.

Again Sema changed the figure. He showed himself running to meet Gorky with widely opened arms, and legs stumbling with joyful excitement.

This time he was satisfied with his work.

With a splinter of glass he polished the figures, went out and gathered a pile of greenish-grey moss, and brought it into the tent. He found a box which had once held sweets and carefully packed his letter carved from bone in a soft bed of moss. He showed it to nobody, fearing to be laughed at.

It was only the address on the box that he entrusted to the collective farm clerk. True, the clerk himself was not particularly learned, but he wrote in a beautiful hand, and for a long time Sema admired the address on the parcel:

Moscow, Kremlin,
The Pushkin Monument.
Alexei Maximovich Gorky
from
Semyon Ilyich Laptander.

He admired it, but he was rather troubled about the Pushkin Monument.

"But suppose he doesn't live there?" he asked shyly.

"Why shouldn't he live there? Of course he does!" the clerk replied confidently. "All the poets live near the Pushkin Monument."

Then, to clinch the matter, he added:

"And if they don't find him at the Pushkin Monument, they'll find him in the Kremlin, I know all about it."

To calm Sema further, the clerk himself took the package to the post office.

Many weary weeks passed. Sema had already lost all hope of a reply when one autumn evening the postman brought him a parcel. He carefully laid it by the fire, and said quietly, as though comforting Sema:

"Never mind, lad. What can you do? That sort of thing happens. . . ."

Sema saw his own letter carved from bone, which had returned to him again.

He had been just a few days too late. The ashes of the man who had sung that wonderful story of Danko's flaming heart, were already buried in the dark red walls of the Moscow Kremlin.

Translated by Eve Manning

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SALTYKOV-SHCHEDRIN, GREAT RUSSIAN SATIRIST

Hertzen, the well-known Russian revolutionary, thinker and writer, who lived for many years in England, once said that in its merciless satire and irony "Russian literature was closest in spirit to the English." When comparing the writings of Saltykov-Shchedrin with those of Swift and Dickens their likeness is seen with particular clarity. In a review of Saltykov's *History of a Small Town*, one of his best works printed in the Academy magazine in 1871, Ivan Turgenev wrote: "There is something of Swift in Saltykov; his serious, fierce humour, his realism soberly lucid even during the wildest play of the imagination, and, in particular, his infallible common sense . . . never leave the author in spite of the unrestrained nature and exaggeration of his forms."

Taine wrote that Swift had the style of a surgeon and a judge, while a Russian critic spoke of Saltykov as "the public prosecutor of Russian social life." At a banquet held in honour of the famous Doctor Botkin, the physiologist Sechenov proposed a toast to Saltykov, the great social diagnostician. Saltykov is distinguished by the severity, clearness and unswerving logic of his style. With his satire he lays bare all the ills of the social organism, and passes a stern and impartial sentence on society. Like Swift, Saltykov creates entire satirical countries inhabited by strange beings who are the incarnation of social evils. His satirical accusation is widespread and implacable. It was no accident that Gorky called Saltykov a "tremendous writer."

Saltykov knew how to reveal with merciless clarity the "propensities" inherent in all evil deeds, outrages, reaction. Thus, he makes one of his characters plan the foundation of an "institute of thoroughbred young men" who alone were to be permitted to procreate. The criterion for the selection of these human thoroughbred stallions was a trend of thought to which any revolutionary or freedom-loving ideas were foreign. One is reminded of the racial mania of the Hitlerites which eclipsed Saltykov-Shchedrin's satirical hyperbole.

His satire combines the severity, breadth and logic of Swift, with certain properties of Dickens. Swift's criticism of life in the England of his day was limited to a satirical portrayal of certain characteristic features. The criticism of Saltykov-Shchedrin and Dickens is a realistic, living delineation. In order to understand the life of Russian society between the forties and the eighties of the 19th century it is just as necessary to read Saltykov-Shchedrin, as it is to study Dickens for a true understanding of English life of that epoch. Turgenev said that Saltykov "knew his native land better than anybody else. . ." "It is impossible to understand the history of Russia during the second half of the 19th century without the help of Shchedrin," wrote Gorky.

Chesterton considered Dickens' inherent "democratic optimism", his characteristic faith in the strength of the common people to be that writer's most important asset. Shchedrin also believed in the ordinary Russian, he witnessed his development and believed in the bright future of his country. But Saltykov does not possess that tender, indulgent smile which we so often see on the countenance of Dickens for he does not share his reformatory illusions. Saltykov is merciless in his insistence on the struggle against evil, and he does not yield to any compromise. Saltykov makes greater demands on the ordinary man than does Dickens.

The grim and implacable nature of Saltykov-Shchedrin's satire is the result of his entire life's experience. From his early childhood, life taught the writer contempt and hatred.

The majority of people, even those whose lives have been laborious and painful, recall their childhood with some semblance of tenderness. Saltykov, however, when speaking about his childhood called it hell. And in reality it was a hell in which the child's soul was systematically and persistently

tortured, mutilated, tainted and estranged from all things good and beautiful: he was accustomed to lies, hypocrisy, greed and cruelty.

Mikhail Evgrafovich Saltykov, who later wrote under the pseudonym of N. Shchedrin, was born in 1826, into the family of a wealthy Russian landowner, in the Tver Province in Central Russia (now Kalinin Region).

His home was a bleak and dismal house standing in plains covered with low fir woods and swamps. All around, the dominating colour was grey. This house knew neither joy nor tenderness, fairy tales, religion, or intellectual pursuits. Children weeping, adult voices raised in argument, quarrels and abuse, blows struck in anger were familiar sounds in the old house. Everything was subordinated to the accumulation of wealth, squeezing the most out of the serfs, trying to economize as much as possible.

Life in his parents' house furnished Shchedrin with the material for *The Golovlyov Family*, and *Poshekhonye*, portraying the social, moral and physical disintegration of serfdom. The figure of the landowner Iudushka Golovlyov has become one of the most famous negative types in Russian literature. There is no other character in whom falsehood, hypocrisy, bluster and mental poverty are as superbly described.

"I can't make out that look in his eyes," Iudushka's mother would say to herself sometimes: "It's just as though he were trying to lay a snare for me, such a venomous, deceitful look!"

All who read this novel retain a haunting picture of the slobbery, grinning oily face of Iudushka, with his hypocritical eyes.

Shchedrin describes Iudushka's mentality in the following words: "He enjoyed the thought of tormenting people, ruining them, spoiling their lives, bleeding them. He went in turn over the various items of his revenue: timber, cattle, corn, meadows, etc., and built round each of them an intricate system of fantastic extortions accompanied by the most complicated calculations of profits to be derived from fines, usury, national calamities, stocks and shares. In short, he created for himself a whole complex world made up of all the sterile ideals of a landowner's idle fancy."

Step by step, Saltykov outlines the road which led Iudushka to inevitable ruin: there you see his social parasitism combined with such personal qualities as unbounded egoism, senseless hypocrisy, falsehood and a passion for tormenting others. And all these lead him to hopeless loneliness.

In that world of idle landowners, where tyranny and cruel exploitation of the serfs reigned, where the estate was farmed by primitive methods using unpaid unproductive serf labour, Saltykov grew up. Such surroundings either make or break a man. The parasitical atmosphere of serf ownership corrupted Saltykov's brothers—small, weak personalities, one of whom served as the prototype for Iudushka, while it tempered the character of the future satirist. Very early in life his nature became saturnine and brusque, offering determined resistance to the influence of his surrcundings. In the family circle he felt the yoke placed upon him by his elders, he saw the humiliating system of favouritism and bribes, and a violent feeling of protest forced him to sympathize with the serfs in their terrible oppression.

Later, Saltykov wrote: "Serf law, oppressive and crude in its forms aroused my sympathy with the enslaved masses. It may seem strange, but still today I feel that the serf law played an important part in my life, and only after having lived through all its phases could I come to a complete, conscientious and passionate rejection of it."

Saltykov was educated in a school which trained tsarist bureaucrats—unprincipled careerists who were chiefly interested in the "science of making good connections." The entire, approved system of education in this institution was directed towards "defiling the human soul." Later, Saltykov was forced to live the dreary life of a minor official in a government office in St. Petersburg and to watch the despotism, savagery and tyranny practised by the upper tsarist bureaucracy. At the same time, however, in 1845-1847, the young Saltykov made friends among the advanced intellectual circles of the capital who were inspired by democratic and socialist ideals. His first stories were published in this period. The sharp protest against the ruling order in Saltykov's early stories soon brought dire punishment upon him. In 1848 he was exiled to a small town in the remote provinces, where he spent seven years.

Exile, however, failed to break Saltykov's spirit. During social upheavals of the late fifties he was able to resume his literary activities. He had accumulated a wealth of material from his observations. Saltykov published his *Tchinovniki*, *Sketches of Provincial Life* (1856-1857) which soon brought him renown. In the grim and strenuous political struggle which broke out at the end of the fifties and beginning of the sixties, Saltykov joined the camp of the revolutionary democracy and published his works in the *Sovremennik* (Contemporary), a periodical edited by Chernyshevsky. But before long, reaction again gained the upper hand. Serfdom was abolished, but with their "liberation", the peasants were robbed in favour of the landowners and were again at their mercy. The landowners and the tsarist police agents continued to ruin the villages. Arrests and persecution of the revolutionary democratically-minded intellectuals began everywhere in Russia. Many vacillated and either betrayed their cause and went over to the side of the government or retired from political life altogether. Saltykov, however, chose a different road. At the end of the sixties his art reached its highest level.

In 1862-1870, Saltykov wrote his famous *History of a Small Town* in which he summed up the results of all his observations of the negative sides of Russian life of that epoch. *The History of a Small Town* is the story of the little provincial town of Glupov (which translated into English means "Foolborough" or "Stupidtown"), written in the form of annals kept by the local archivists, who naively record all outstanding events in the life of the town.

Glupov, in Saltykov's portrayal, is the embodiment of everything reactionary, stagnant and backward that existed in Russian life as the result of the age-old yoke of the autocracy. The satirist was not afraid to tell the people the bitter truth because he never lost his belief in the bright future. "The people is a body strong enough to bear any truth," wrote Saltykov in a letter.

The History consists of the biographies of the governors who one after the other "ruled the fate of the town of Glupov." In creating the characters of these governors, Saltykov succeeded in endowing each of them with one or the other of the most repulsive attributes of the tsarist regime of oppression.

In these annals we meet the town governor whose brain consists of a music box capable of pronouncing only two sentences: "I won't allow it!" and "I'll destroy them!" and the governor who experienced an "uncontrollable urge for legislation," who controls each step of the townspeople and issues laws on any subject, as for instance, the law on the "respectable ways of baking pies," and the governor who "rode into Glupov on a white horse, burned down the high school and abolished learning."

One of the most biting satirical images created by Saltykov is the portrait of the governor Ugryum-Burcheyev, the "ignorant scoundrel," "who wanted to extinguish the sun and put the whole world into barracks." His rule put an end to the existence of Glupov. "The history stops here," are the closing words of the satirist, who endows them with the meaning that even history itself could not be reconciled to such monstrous tyranny and to such servile subordination.

The author describes Ugryum-Burcheyev as a "man of medium height with a wooden face that was apparently never lit up by a smile; thick, close-cropped, jet-black hair covered a conically-shaped skull and framed the narrow, sloping forehead like a skull cap. His eyes were grey and sunken, covered by slightly swollen lids, their glance was direct and unswerving; a sharp thin nose, running from the forehead in a practically straight line; thin, pale lips, drooping under the clipped moustache; a well-developed jaw, although it did not bear a particularly-defined carnivorous expression, nevertheless showed an intangible readiness to bite or crush. His whole figure was gaunt, with narrow, raised shoulders, and a chest, artificially pushed forward. His arms were long and muscular. The surrounding landscape was a desert in the centre of which stood a prison, and overhead, instead of the sky, hung a soldier's grey coat. . . ."

"In his mind's eye the reader sees the image of an idiot who has arrived at some gloomy decision and has vowed to carry it into effect. Idiots are always dangerous, not because they are necessarily malicious (in an idiot malice or kindness are absolutely immaterial qualities) but because they have no sense and always push forward in a headlong rush as though the road on which they stand belongs to them alone. Seen from a distance, it may seem that these are people of grim, but firm convictions who consciously press forward towards a definite aim. However, this is an optical illusion which should by no means be encouraged. In reality, this is a being, hermetically sealed on all sides who pushes forward because he is incapable of imagining himself in any connection whatsoever with any outward phenomena."

Saltykov created the imaginary town of Glupov as a miniature model of tsarist autocracy in Russia. *The History of a Small Town* is a brilliant illustration of the wisdom and strength of the Aesop manner, so characteristic of Saltykov's works. The great satirist described comparatively small agents of tsarism while having the whole of its system in mind. The censors could not bring themselves to acknowledge that they understood the true aim of Shchedrin's satire. Thus, by using "Aesopian" language, Shchedrin outwitted the censors more than once. Another proof of this are his political *Innocent Tales* which are permeated with remarkable humour.

In the story *How One Peasant Fed Two Generals*, the satirist uses the Robinson Crusoe plot. In some miraculous fashion two generals find themselves on a desert island. However, contrary to Crusoe, they are not forced to exert their energy. These generals, have lived at the expense of the peasants all their lives. They are firmly convinced that "there are peasants everywhere" and that the latter must appear also on the desert island and provide them with food and clothing. And the peasant, of course, appears. He supplies the generals with food and drink, but the latter, in fear that he may run away, bind him to a tree with a rope which he himself has woven at their orders.

In another of his famous tales, *The Liberal*, Saltykov created the image of a liberal, who prating of freedom, in reality agrees to a cowardly compromise with the autocracy. With convincing truth, Saltykov expressed the nature of the opportunist policy of Russian liberalism of those times in three formulas by which the liberal was guided in succession. He begins by presenting his demands loudly to the authorities, restricting their fulfillment, however, by the reservation "if possible". It appears that even this slogan is too broad and the liberal replaces it by the formula "as much as possible." When it becomes clear that this "as much as possible" is equal to nought, the liberal begins to act in "conformity with villainy" and openly slings his ideals into the mud.

The severity of Saltykov's satire was the direct result of his patriotism, of his high demands upon the Russian people. Saltykov said of himself: "My heart aches with love for Russia. . ." But Saltykov's patriotism, like the patriotism of the best Russian people, never became a limited nationalism. Saltykov presented the "idea of human progress" in opposition to the conception of the "distinction of racial peculiarities." In Saltykov's words "the idea inspiring patriotism is the idea of the common weal. The educational value of patriotism is enormous: it is a school in which man learns to accept the idea of humanity." In Russian life, Saltykov saw the "eternal striving for the life of all mankind" that is, the desire to carry into effect

on Russian soil the advanced democratic and socialist ideas common to mankind.

Leo Tolstoy noted in Saltykov "the understanding of the true interests in the life of the people." In the *Satirical Traveller's Notes in Foreign Lands*, Saltykov makes a comparison of life in France, Germany and Russia. The writer emphasizes the economic and cultural backwardness of Russia, but at the same time he sees in Russian life great possibilities.

Saltykov's foreign impressions belong to the years immediately following the Franco-Prussian war. Admiring French people, he sharply ridiculed the French republic, that well-fed, fattening "republic without republicans," the opportunism of its political leaders, the lack of ideals in its naturalistic literature. But the lash of his satire fell with particular vehemence on the victory-drunken German militarists. According to Shchedrin "the entire life of modern Berlin is at present concentrated in the building which towers over the Kaiserplatz and bears the name: 'General Staff'. . . ."

Shchedrin gave an amazing pen sketch of the dull barrack-like streets of Berlin:

"Modesty has given way to vanity, political evasion to absolutely groundless claims to world mastery, reticence to an unsuccessful attempt to win the approval of foreigners by the bourgeois luxury of the new districts and by a certain, second-rate licentiousness. . . As soon as he approaches Berlin the foreigner breathes the atmosphere of boredom, of the smug satisfaction of the officers, and of a collection of bedraggled women from the Orpheum. . . It is difficult to imagine anything more desolate than the streets of Berlin. Of course, there is no lack of traffic (there can be no lack of traffic in a city with a population of almost a million), but there is a worried, almost tortured air about this traffic, as though all these people, moving to and fro, had but one wish—to run away. You feel the desire to call after every passing carriage: 'Good luck! You are, of course, leaving Berlin for good! . .' Just an endless, silent pendulum-like movement to and fro—and nothing else."

Saltykov expressed his feelings towards the Prussian militarists in his satirical description of an officer:

"When I pass a Berlin officer, I am always startled. With his entire figure, bearing, manners, with his protruding chest and shaven chin he seems to cry to me: 'I am a hero!' It seems to me that were he to say: 'I am a robber and I am going to flay you,' I would feel easier. But this 'hero' is no joking matter. . . .

"Our Russian officer never made such a depressing impression on me. First of all, he is slimmer and his chest does not protrude to the same extent: secondly, he certainly does not scream at anybody: 'I am a hero!' A Russian is truly capable of being a hero but this does not cause his chest to stick out nor make one stare at him. . . ."

Saltykov foresaw the threat which the German militarists presented to Russia and to the whole of humanity: "Berlin is made for one purpose only—the killing of people," he wrote.

He was gifted with amazing political perspicacity, with the ability to reveal the political meaning of the behaviour of individuals and entire social groups, to grasp the political significance of phrases and declarations, the inner logic of various political opinions and actions.

At the same time, Saltykov's political characteristics were inseparable from moral values. In the representatives of reaction and the military, in the agents of tsarism, in all persons supporting the rule of the serf-owners, Saltykov saw moral depravity, poverty of ideas, falsehood, treachery, moral iniquity. Perhaps, the identity of political and moral values makes itself felt with particular force in the figure of the "scoundrel" created by the great satirist.

"Look how firmly he treads the path of the scoundrels and with what inexpressibly shameless eyes he gazes on all things living! Hear what conviction rings in his voice when he says: Yes, I am a scoundrel. His limited ideas gave rise to insolence; insolence, in turn, insured him against the possibility of any shocks. . . .

"Everywhere he appears with an open face, everywhere he announces himself: don't you know me? I am a scoundrel! I am the burden called upon to crush life. I am infamy called upon to abolish conviction, honesty, truth, self-sacrifice. I am profligacy and my aim is to fill the world with the putrid matter of treason, bribery, disloyalty and treachery.

"And everywhere he preaches: there is no way but the way of the scoundrel! All shall be scoundrels! All, all! For he wants to bring shame not only on himself but on all things living, not only on the present but on the future as well."

Now, after the terrible documental self-indictments of the Hitlerite barbarians at the Nürnberg trial, the figure of Shchedrin's scoundrel appears as a grim prophesy of the dangers standing in the way of humanity if it does not succeed in completely eradicating fascism.

Saltykov lashed the "scoundrel" so mercilessly because he saw in him a threat to the future, a terrible moral poison capable of ruining entire generations.

Saltykov asked the scoundrel: "Do you in all sincerity really think that society can be bred to hate life, development, progress?"

The author gave a negative reply to this question from the point of view of the general trend of historical development, but knew that for a given historical period the scoundrel could succeed in his attempt. He wrote: "The history of humanity is an endless martyrology, but at the same time it is an endless record of progress."

Saltykov was tireless in his exposure of the "pig-sty ideals" of the scoundrels and rogues. He said: "Foster the ideals of the future in your hearts, for they are as the sun-rays without the life-giving influence of which the globe would have turned to stone. Do not let your hearts turn to stone, look frequently and steadily at the shining lights gleaming far down the perspectives of the future. Only to those deprived of farsightedness do these lights appear unreal and shad-

owy. In reality, however, they do not represent a denial of the past and present, but are the result of all that is best and most human, promised by the former and developed in the latter."

Saltykov did not build imaginary Utopias. Unlike Lucian and Juvenal he did not seek ideals in the past, and unlike the satirists of the Renaissance he did not idealize the abstract, normal man, or Voltaire's "simpleton". He did not create Swift's land of the Houyhnhums. Altogether, Saltykov did not picture any positive characters or ideals.

Saltykov's satires embody the strength and beauty of the ideological victory of progressive thought over all forms of tyranny, terror, robbery, falsehood and treachery.

The laughter of Shchedrin is "laughter full of scorn, victorious laughter from the top downwards, laughter that has already conquered in the field of ideas and sentiments, that has crushed the ridiculed nightmare, but at the same time, that is near to tears, trembling with anger and choked by helplessness, laughter sparkling from its inner victory and permeated with indignation, made still more bitter by the knowledge of its helplessness."

Saltykov mercilessly ridiculed the opportunist conception that the belief in inevitable historical triumph of advanced ideas freed the believer from all "grief, agitation and indignation . . . because truth and good would conquer in the end." He demanded action, enthusiasm, deeds. "Thought which has become passionate, which has reached the point of enthusiasm that is the volcanic force which raises historical figures from the heart of masses. . . Yes, only thought which has become heroic can give birth to heroism in action!"

Therefore, Saltykov said that the "desire for action" was imperative. "In this desire, the living human heart trembles, the ever inquiring, restless human mind lies concealed."

Saltykov's own activities were heroic. Throughout his lifetime he stood face to face with the hated autocracy, and tirelessly, with unfailing courage, he fought against an enemy in whose hands lay all power.

Being a revolutionary democrat Saltykov regarded the life of the people, of the peasantry as the true foundation of the national life.

"Human activities outside the sphere of the people are aimless and senseless," said Saltykov. Therefore those whose activities were harmful to the people, appeared to the great satirist as historically doomed, "spectres".

Saltykov's works make us laugh and think, and rouse our indignation. He was a writer of a grim power. It was not accidental that he appeared to his contemporaries as a prophet, denouncing the tyranny, savagery and rapacity of those in power, and calling on the people to struggle for the brighter future. The famous Danish critic Brandes compared Saltykov's satire with the sharp point of Odysseus' red-hot brand with which he pierced the eye of the man-eating Cyclops.

Tsarism took vengeance on Saltykov in every possible way. Saltykov was forced to write with one eye on the censor, who wherever possible, preferred to adopt crude administrative measures. His works were delayed by the censor and cut out of periodicals, magazines to which he contributed were closed down.

Saltykov gave all his strength and time to his work. His personal life was lonely and unhappy. In his satires we frequently meet the figure of a sweetly chattering and smiling "Dolly". Saltykov's wife was just such a "doll". The mental life of her husband was alien to her, she regarded his work only as a source of income necessary for the purchase of dresses, diamonds, and the upkeep of an expensive establishment. She flirted with guards' officers and young society dandies. She tortured Saltykov morally even during the last years of his life when he suffered severe physical anguish, and when his illness reached a crisis she asked him cold-heartedly: "Will you die soon?"

Saltykov dearly loved his children—a boy and a girl. But it must have been painful for Saltykov to realize that his children were coming more and more under the influence of their mother.

The writer's loneliness increased particularly when in 1884 the government closed his journal *Otechestvennyie Zapiski*, depriving him of his accustomed surroundings and work in the editorial office. During the last few years of his life Saltykov was forced to publish his works in liberal periodicals which he despised.

During the eighties Saltykov had serious grounds to fear for his freedom. For instance, on finding one of Saltykov's tales, that had been banned by the censor, in an underground lithography in 1884, the Moscow secret police asked the Ministry of Interior for a warrant to search the writer's house and, should they find compromising material, to arrest him. The Ministry, however, refused both requests, fearing by such severe measures to enhance the popularity of the famous satirist. It is interesting to note that in the same year the London *Daily News* carried a report to the effect that a search had been made in Saltykov's home, speaking of the writer as a representative of the Russian liberal party.

The reactionary press openly persecuted the satirist. In one of his letters, Saltykov wrote: "In general, so much hatred has collected around my name now that it is horrible to live. And the love which exists is silent. In that lies the tragedy of a writer's life."

Although Saltykov was now a lonely old man morally and physically bent, the passion of his satire and belief in his people still lived. "I vow," wrote he, "the minute I feel that the soul in me no longer trembles, I shall lay down my pen, even if I must die a beggar." In January, 1889 he completed one of his greatest works *Poshekhonye*. He died in April, 1889.

Between 1894-1916 only 134,000 copies of Saltykov's works were published and only in the Russian language. Under Soviet rule, between 1917 and 1940, 6,755,000 copies of Saltykov-Shchedrin's books were published in twenty-six languages of the peoples of the U.S.S.R.

YAKOV ELSBERG

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MIKHAIL PRISHVIN

"There is nothing so hard to talk about as good things," wrote Mikhail Prishvin in one of his stories. And it is just as hard to find the right words in which to write about this absolutely unique artist. Maxim Gorky was troubled by the same difficulty:

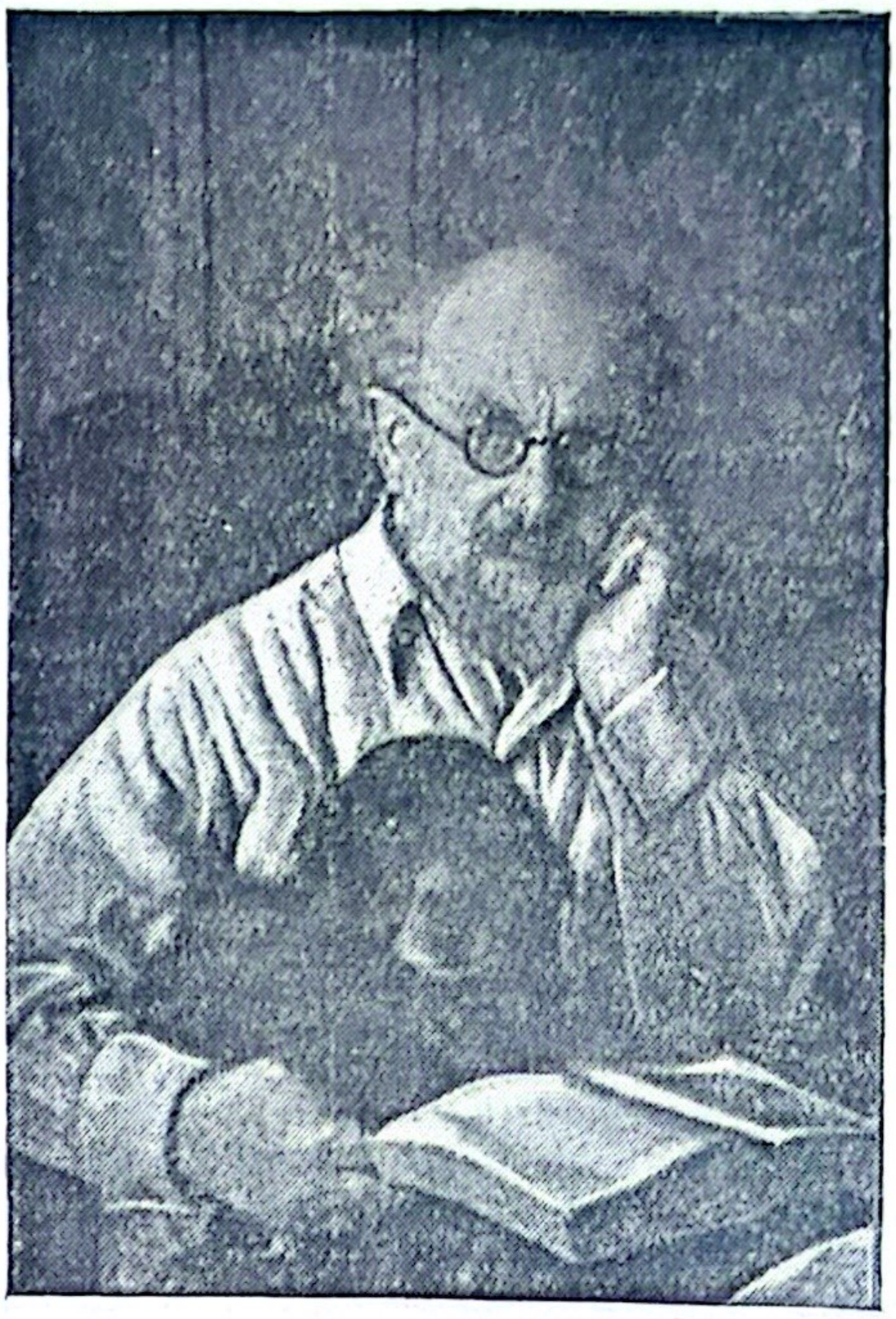
"It is not easy, Mikhail Mikhailovich, to write about you, because one must write as well as you do, and I know that I shall not be able to do that."

The poet Alexander Blok, speaking of Prishvin's stories once said: "They are, of course, poetry, but something else as well." This something else which is not poetry, is that unique quality in Prishvin's works, which he himself says is due to "intimate attention" which an author pays to his subject and his "intensely real" attitude to it; this is what gives his works such great instructive value that historians, ethnographers, pedagogues, hunters regard them variously as historical or ethnographical works, children's stories, hunters' tales, and so forth.

Prishvin's "intimate attention" is part of his constant affirmation of the joy of life, or love of life, by his praise of the earth, of the universe, and of its son and master—man.

"There are secrets known to the cells of hermits," writes Prishvin, "which all of them regard as temptations of the 'devil.' Every real writer has the same secrets. One of them is—'I am better than anybody else.' Another of them is a propensity for feeling insulted: 'I was forgotten here, I was ignored there. . .' These thoughts that fill your mind in the cell at night make you feel that you are a tree with a rotten core. But when the morning brings fresh courage, you open the window, you hear the murmuring grouse, the cries of the starlings, you see the chocolate-hued branches of the birch trees bursting with sap, the grey catkins of aspens already in bloom, you again feel that you have conquered all that is petty in you and you realize why it is that Antaeus was reborn every time he touched the earth." (*Antaeus*).

There are few writers who have devoted their lives and work so consistently to the fight for happiness. There is nothing outstanding in Prishvin's biography. He was born in 1873 in the family of a merchant landowner. His belief in science and in fairy tales he gained in his parents' home. In the huge garden of his father's estate he composed his first legend: "God drove Adam from paradise and ordered him to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow: after some time, God tired of looking at the banished Adam and he created another one whom he permitted to enter paradise again: but the second Adam also sinned, like the first, and he, too, was banished from paradise. But while the second Adam was being created, the first had multiplied and captured all the good land, and the second Adam, wishing to fulfil the commandment to "earn his bread by the sweat of his brow" could not find any free



land and wandered eternally over the vast country, searching for it."

As schoolboy Prishvin tried to run away to the unknown land—Asia. He roamed and hunted for two days, and then he was caught and sent back to school.

"I was forced to recognize the existence of reality, but I cherished my imaginary Asia in the depth of my soul which is probably why I could find no place for myself until I finally proved the reality of my Asia." The legend of the second Adam became one of the most prominent themes in Prishvin's works; it is always combined with the problem of the relationship between reality and fairyland, between Asia and school. The search for free, virgin soil in which the flower of creative art can grow unhampered, the desire to know reality and turn it into a fairyland are the impulses which determined Prishvin's work and his way of life.

He began his independent life as an agronomist in an experimental station and wrote for agricultural magazines, but these activities did not last long: the future writer could not give himself up wholeheartedly to agronomy. Prishvin was not one of those who could work without finding satisfaction in his occupation, and he soon gave up the experimental station. He began to experience poverty. He wrote short stories that editors consistently returned to him, but this could not kill his desire to write. In spite of his need, he did not look for other work. We find only a few hints of his difficulties in keeping his family: he regards misfortune as an unimportant, transitive stage of life, and "either it ends in death, or its role is that of a plumb line to sound the

depth of life, a stage in the creation of happiness."

Unable to make his living by writing Prishvin set out for the north to record the local folklore; somebody advised him to buy a gun and shoot game for himself. Later he wrote: "Where is that gun which became the source of my happiness? With the first shot I refound those days of pure happiness which I had experienced when I ran away to Asia. I can still see the green woods in the flash of the first shot fired at a woodcock rising from the thicket. I killed it, and became a free man forever; at that moment a new understanding came to me."

Having found his happiness, Prishvin also found himself as a writer. His first book, *In the Realm of Birds Unafraid of Man*, contains impressions gained during this journey to the north. In it he describes the life of the old believers (sectarians), the struggle of the schismatists against the government. This book was of such great ethnographical value that the author was awarded the medal of the Russian Geographical Society.

And so Prishvin became a writer. Soon after the publication of this book he was invited to write for one of the leading Russian newspapers.

Now he was able to continue the search for free land for his second Adam. He arranged the expeditions and hunting parties he had dreamed of in childhood. "I travelled all over the country, north, south, east and west, to the mountains, the forests, the oceans, the deserts, and reached that Asia I had wanted to escape to as a child. . . ."

The rather hampering influence of ethnographical research disappears in Prishvin's *Kolobok* (The Round Loaf), his second book about the north. The nature of the north, its inhabitants and their customs had so much poetic attraction for him that he found the ancient folk tale the most suitable form of expression. He produced a series of sketches whose poetical background in no way deprives them of their true realism; the author shows us the difficulties of the life of the dwellers on the northern sea coast, their fight against the elements, their poverty and their grim struggle for existence. They centre around the figure of the strong, taciturn, stern man of the north.

His travels through Central Asia provided Prishvin with material for a series of stories published under the general title of *The Black Arab*, which he himself describes as his "first free work of fiction."

Prishvin's unique talent reached its full development after the October Revolution. Circumstances brought him to the editorial offices of a paper catering to hunters and "here," declares the author, "the happy, short stories, which you all know so well first took form." In addition, he wrote a long novel about his own life: *Kashchey's*[1] *Chains*, as well as a series of sketches which he himself described as an "attempt at the conscious application of artistic talent to the study of a territory, delineation of its peculiarities."

But in spite of the great artistic value of these works, Prishvin reached the apex of his career as a writer in his stories about nature, about animals and about man, "the mind of all living things," which have won him a special place in Soviet literature.

"I looked at the fisherman in his boat amongst the reeds. It seemed to me that the waterfowl, the reeds, the water reflecting the trees and everything else, the entire environment had posed a question that was answered by the man in the boat: there rides the one about whom you have asked and for whom you have waited, it is your own Reason in the boat." (*Man in the Forest.*)

The lack of invention in Prishvin's stories and sketches, seemingly "photographs" of nature, is always accompanied by a careful "artistic" selection of material made with the conscientiousness of a scientist, portraying nature in all its complexity of colour, light, contour, scent and movement, its development and the interrelation of its elements.

"That furtive mist that crawled across the fields yesterday lifted before sunup and as the sun rose it twisted itself into a white rainbow and then dispersed. A heavy, lustreless dew had fallen. The love calls of the grouse filled the air and from the floodlands came the cries of the cranes. There were so many spiders' webs that the dogs were blinded by them. All the flowers in the open glades were joined together by the webs, cunning traps woven by spiders that looked like lacework in the dew. These dew-besprinkled webs were particularly beautiful against a background of dark firs. The dainty pearls of dew on them frequently glittered, rainbow-hued, in the sun; the greatest thing of all was that these astoundingly beautiful and complicated structures seemed to grow out of dew and sunshine as they do in a fairy tale and the result was something that could not be told in a tale or described by the pen. . . ." (*Spiders*)

Prishvin studies nature at all seasons, its awakening in spring, its flowering in summer, its winter life and autumn death.

A portrayal of spring opens his cycle *The Calendar of Nature* which describes all the links in the entire course of the year. The chapter on "Spring" consists of the following series: "The Spring of Light," "The Spring of the Water," "The Spring of the Green Grass," "The Spring of the Forest," "The Spring of Man." He watches the play of the light in spring, hears the first song of the liberated waters, sees the return of the cranes, the kestrels and the swans, admires the blossoming nut tree, studies the behaviour of the beasts, the first movements of the sap in the birch trees. "I cut a thin twig from a birch to clean my pipe with. A drop of birch sap gathered at the incision and sparkled in the sun. The forest presented a mottled appearance—the white snow dotted with blue puddles of water, and at midday it was quite warm." (*The First Movement of the Sap in the Birch Tree.*)

Prishvin's accurate and simple portrayal of natural phenomena emphasizes their dynamic character, the constant change taking place in all things living in the complex and beautiful interrelationship of their elements;

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[1] A personage from Russian folk tales, an evil magician endowed with immortality.

the *Calendar* is in the form of a diary (it contains descriptions of events in the life of the author), and he writes: "I shall not invent anything, I shall write without changing any of the names to suit myself, recording every day of spring: Mother Earth, herself, shall be the heroine of my story."

It is Prishvin's aim to portray the great truth of nature. In his *Raindrops in the Forest* Prishvin gives prominence to the most meticulous observations:

"I was able to hear a mouse gnawing a root under the snow." Or, "I heard birds take wing with a faint dove-like cooing and rushed to the dog to find out whether it was true that the woodsnipe had really arrived. The dog, however, was trotting calmly along. I went back to admire the floods and on the way I again heard that same dove-like cooing. Then again and again. At last I realized that I ought to keep still as long as the sound lasted. Very gradually the sound became a constant one and I realized that somewhere under the snow the tiniest of streams was gurgling out its song. I was so pleased with this discovery that as I walked along I began to listen to other streams and was astonished to learn that I could detect the difference in their natures by their voices."

Whence does man obtain this ability to see, hear, and scent everything, to "read" nature so inspiredly, one may ask? Fenimore Cooper's *Pathfinder*, the Russian explorers who discovered paths through thousands of kilometres of untravelled taiga, hunters and discoverers of new lands—these are Prishvin's predecessors who possessed the same sixth sense, the same instinctive understanding of all the signs and hidden traces of nature. But today this instinct is enriched by the exact knowledge given by modern science and becomes that "intimate attention" about which the writer himself speaks.

He brings the directness of a child's impressions to aid modern science as well as the synthetic strength of poetical generalizations, the rich practical experience gained by preceding generations who lived in close contact with nature, and the age-old wisdom of the people expressed in numerous portents, proverbs, aphorisms, handed down from father to son.

"When the young starling puts its head in at the window it is time to sow barley," writes Prishvin in the *Raindrops in the Forest* and these words resemble an excerpt from an old, unwritten peasant calendar of the days when there was no scientific farming. Prishvin does not remain at this level of primitive reasoning; he only takes from it all that is valuable, all that can help him to a better understanding of nature. "That wisdom by which everything lives in nature, and which it inherits from its ancestors . . . this general and, as it were, latent wisdom of nature has been linked up with the advanced human intelligence in which great plans are born. . . .

"We people have been progressing for millions of years and have lost that ability to float, fly or sit tight like the leaves on a twig firmly fixed to the mighty tree trunk, or crawl up the fragile stem of a plant that is waving in the wind, or whirl around in the air in the form of seed-bearing down, or the ability to scatter spores into the air—we have been everything and we have lost so much that is useful, that it would be good if we could get it back again. It is only because we are related to the whole world that we are able, by virtue of intimate attention, to reconstruct the common bonds and find the likeness of ourselves in other forms of life, even in animals, even in plant life, and even in stones." *(Pictures of What We Have Lost.)*

This search for "the likeness of oneself" merges with the author's desire to find the "truth of nature," with a particular attentiveness to nature, which does not allow of any invention of fantasy. These are features that make him unique as a writer on animal life. The representation of animals in literature has mostly been akin to mythology since ancient times. In an artistic representation an animal rarely exists as itself, as an image of a living being with its own peculiarities and attributes. Mythology lent definite properties to certain animals, and ever since then the ass has always been an "ass", the spider—a bloodsucker, the cock—a dandy and a fighter, and so forth.

Another form of distortion was the attribution of human customs, qualities and passions to animals.

"While testing my gun I wounded a crow; it flew some little distance and alighted on a tree. The other crows circled round it and then went off but one of them flew down and perched beside the wounded bird. I moved so close to them that I could have expected any crow to fly away. This one, however, stuck to its perch. How could I find out why this was: did the crow perch beside the wounded bird out of some feeling of community with it or, as we should say of people, out of friendship or sympathy? Perhaps the wounded crow was a daughter and the mother flew to protect her offspring in the way common to all living creatures, in the way Turgenev describes the mother grouse—wounded and bleeding it ran to the deccy. This is always happening in the bird kingdom.

"But when one remembers the crow as a carrion eater an unpleasant thought arises in one's mind: perhaps the second crow that sat so close to the wounded bird smelt blood and, intoxicated by visions of an approaching bloody feast, had seated itself as close as possible to the doomed bird; an incipient sense of ownership may have made it reluctant to leave it even in a moment of danger.

"If there is a danger of anthropomorphism, of transferring human emotions to the crow, in the first of these two possibilities, there is also a danger of 'corvomorphism' in the second—a crow must inevitably be a bird of prey." (*Crows*)

Prishvin's love of truth forbids him to make use of either method—an animal must be depicted as its real self, without animalism or anthropomorphism. Freedom from these fetters coupled with his knowledge and love of animals enable him to write those wonderful hunting stories in which animals are the leading characters.

He constantly observes the behaviour of the animal, and seeks to show the logic of the actions and customs which frequently arouse his admiration and delight. He considers the squirrel's memory remarkable—the squirrel remembers where it has hidden its nuts and immediately finds them. He studies the workday life of the birds, their character and intellect.

"I saw a woodpecker: the stumpy-legged bird (and its tail is also so tiny) arrived carrying a big fir cone in its beak. It alighted on a birch where it had a workshop for the stripping of fir cones. With the cone in its mouth it ran up the tree trunk to the place where it usually split open the scales of the cone and saw that the fork in the tree was occupied by an old cone that had been stripped of its scales but not removed; there was no place to put the new cone in. The poor bird could not throw the old one out because its beak was full.

"Then the woodpecker did what a human being would have done under the same circumstances—it held the fresh cone between its breast and the tree trunk while it threw out the old one with its beak, placed the new cone in the workshop and began work on it.

"How clever it is, always bright, lively and industrious." *(Woodpecker)*

He gives a new interpretation of the "work" of the animal world. The spider is no longer a horrible, bloated bloodsucker but, on the contrary, a fairly beautiful and useful animal—it kills flies. He is sincerely hurt by the established abhorrence of the spider—a diligent, talented artist.

The animals have different characters—there are clever hares and stupid ones, and the clever ones are so dear to him that he never kills them—there are plenty of stupid ones left to be killed. Animals also have various experiences and adventures in their lives, which are interesting and instructive.

The imposing black hen "Queen of Spades," has hatched four little goslings; she treated them with the same motherly care as she displayed for her chicks, even when they had grown almost bigger than she was herself; it is true that from time to time she looked at them with some misgiving. . . A thunderstorm came one day and the excited hen drove her fosterlings into the shed and spread her wings over them. The storm passed and the geese wanted to get out into the fresh air: they got up and stretched their long necks and the staid hen found herself raised into the air on four pillars. There is no doubt that this was an adventure, an event in the hen's life; after it she realized that the geese were not her children and she left them severely alone.

Dogs are the author's particular friends and helpers, and he loves and understands them especially well. All Prishvin's readers know and love the proud and sensitive Yarik, the quiet, affectionate Verny (Fido), the talented Kate. The history of each of these is told in great detail, with a full description of their characters, talents, habits and conduct, their relations to their master and to other dogs.

It appears that sometimes the feelings of dogs and men are similar. Like a man, a dog may grasp at the shadow and miss the substance. A love affair begins between Yarik and Kate, and their master watches it with great interest. "It seemed to me that I understood the dumb love of Yarik and Kate much better than if they had been able to speak and I had overheard their conversations."

Unfortunately, however, the fruit of this love would have been mongrel puppies and the dogs therefore had to be separated; but knowing Yarik's passionate fondness of hunting, his master decided to make an experiment and to take him "to work" together with Kate; and he was right—the dog made no use of his opportunity. "With his eyes intently fixed on the invisible birds in the grass, Yarik pointed like a bronze statue, and behind him, still unlearned in the art of hunting, stood Kate in evident perplexity."

Kate was mated with a thoroughbred of her own breed, and after a time her puppies were born. Everybody came to look at them and to stroke Kate. Yarik also wanted to look and stuck his red head in at the door. And here something strange happened: "The mother started, her eyes flamed green with anger, and her fur bristled from neck to tail." The perplexed master told his friends about this incident, and a certain lady, "well versed in the ways of love," explained Kate's behaviour as follows: "Had I been in her place I would have torn Yarik to pieces; he had such a perfect opportunity in the bushes, and he stood like a fool and pointed at an invisible bird." (*The Love of Yarik.*)

In an extremely tragic little story the author tells of the death of his favourite dog, Anchar, an unusually clever harrier. One day when out hunting, the dog is accidentally shot by the author's companion. "Blue smoke curled above the green valley, I waited and waited, and the minutes seemed like years; still there was no Anchar; no Anchar came out of the smoke. And as it cleared I saw my Anchar sleeping his last, long sleep, couched on the green grass as on a bed. The heavy drops of autumn rain fell from the tall trees to the small ones, from the small ones to the bushes, from the bushes onto the grass, and from the grass onto the earth: a sad murmur ran through the wood and was only hushed on the breast of the earth: in a deep hush the earth receives all tears into its bosom. . . .

"And I watched it all with dry eyes. . . 'Well, even worse things happen,' I thought, 'So men are sometimes killed by accident.'

"I am a strong man and I soon regained mastery of myself, and I began to think how to make it easier for my friend, for I knew that he must be suffering no less than I, and we hunters know how to wipe out grief with joy."

Prishvin has a special approach to children's stories. Always seeking sincerity in his writings, he is particularly severe to himself in his children's stories, considering children "full-fledged citizens."

There is no need to invent anything especially instructive for children, a simple story about nature and the life of men is sufficiently instructive in itself, and even the most ordinary conversation of simple people contains so much poetry that it rings like the

beginning of a fairy tale. Hence, the author's efforts to achieve the beauty of folklore in his stories.

And, indeed, his beautiful story: *The Storehouse of the Sun*[1] is very much like a legend. Behind the simple plot—it tells how the brother and sister, Mitrasha and Nastya went to gather cranberries in a thicket lying in the midst of a stretch of marshland, how they quarrelled, and as the result of this, both almost perished—lies a clearly defined moral.

Together with Nastya and Mitrasha the reader comes to understand the ruinous influence of the evil feelings to which the children gave way, he is led to this by the direct logic of the story, by the convincing strength of its characters.

But the story has another theme, and this is the deepest and at the same time the most important one—the theme of the conquest and mastery of nature. Mitrasha and Nastya, having gone through various mental and physical trials and tribulations, become worthy participants in the general process of construction. Their hearts and minds have been tempered for work, for the mastery of the secret treasures of nature. And these treasures are enormous. There, where Mitrasha almost perished, lies the storehouse of the sun—vast supplies of peat which must be used for the benefit of man. When the boy grows up, he will find this storehouse, he will take his place in the ranks of the skilled and clever conquerors and liberators of nature. It is by one of these tireless seekers that the story is told.

Amongst Mikhail Prishvin's best works is the book *Ginseng*. (Ginseng is the root of life which restores and increases the strength of man); this is the story of the efforts of two men—one a scientist and the other a practical experimenter—to create a "second nature."

The intimate attention to nature, to all its manifold, complicated and evasive phenomena, is inseparably connected with the desire to utilize it for the betterment of human life, for culture and progress; but, besides this general root of life, every man has his own, and if he finds it he will be happy and free, and the strength of creation will blossom in him in full splendour.

"How deep lies the virgin soil, how great the inexhaustible creative powers contained in man and how many millions of unfortunate people come and go without ever understanding the nature of their own Ginseng, without being able to penetrate into the full depths of their own sources of strength, courage, joy and happiness!"

The story *Ginseng* is a book of joy. The stretches of Manchurian forest are extraordinary—"wooded hills and valleys filled with such tall grass that a horseman is lost to view in it, huge red flowers flaming like fires, butterflies as big as birds, and rivers filled with flowers." This forest with its untouched natural luxuriance is full of sound and brilliant colour and all the time we feel its strength and its elemental majesty.

"The impenetrable jungle began no more than ten paces from the house, a mass of oaks and velvet trees, small-leafed maples, hornbeam and yews intertwined with the lianas of the Chinese lemon and grape vines, and between them hummocks of earth covered in wormwood and lilacs such as we only see in our gardens."

The beauty and primordial strength of this forest are concentrated in the young antlers of the deer, the healing properties of which are well known throughout the world. Many legends have been created on this subject, telling how these antlers return youth and happiness to man. But there is still another treasure of the Manchurian forests—the wonderful root of life, Ginseng, which gives men eternal youth and beauty.

Through the generations the Manchurians and the Chinese have searched for this root which brings riches to the merchant but is only a meagre source of existence to the woodsman. A young pathfinder comes to the taiga. Louven, an old woodsman who has discovered the secret of affinity with nature, teaches him to pay "intimate attention" to it. The forest wisdom of the old man merges with the high culture of the young tracker who is not satisfied with this passive contemplation and enjoyment of nature. He searches for his own root of life and finds it in the constructive labour that brings him into contact with his beloved nature and is of service to all mankind. He organizes a deer farm for the purpose of obtaining the young antlers, and he gives himself up to this undertaking with the passion and seriousness of a scientist.

The description of animals and nature and the true poetry conveying the emotional life of the hero are magnificent—we feel his longing for his own kind, his love of nature, his great and difficult work, and his grateful friendship with the old woodsman, who, however, cannot take the place of his cultural equals. Grief and joy go to make up the life of man, but the root of life is the road to happiness, once it has been found. The memory of an unfortunate first love lends a slightly lyrical shade to this happiness, and serves to inspire rather than darken it.

In the romantic story of *Ginseng* the greatest possible expression is given to Prishvin's ideas of man's close ties with all things living, and of the most wonderful thing in the world—the intelligence and creative efforts of man. Prishvin believes in the victory of the best in man. Of course, there are also evil sides to the human character, but these are not the chief thing, they disappear and are forgotten, while the best—the great heart, the great love of man—will live forever.

Prishvin's numerous short stories include very few in which man is the leading character, but nevertheless, the human image, even if painted with sparing strokes, is always a finished portrait.

A pathfinder through our world, Prishvin portrays the various national types and local colours with remarkable accuracy and consummate skill, never resorting to false exotics. We are constantly made aware of the "school for the careful treatment of facts." These facts—life, the occupations of man, his world outlook, his dwelling, manners,

[1] See *Soviet Literature*, No. 4-5, 1946.

clothing, speech, the peculiarity of his smile and so forth—are all drawn with sparing and accurate strokes, and are inspired by that same intimate attention which enables the writer to see, behind all the specific national features, those general, human and beautiful traits which are alike common to the northern seamen, Kirghiz, Tatars, and Russians.

The desire for progress, the admiration of lofty human culture, go side by side with the author's respect for the life of men "in the depth of the centuries," his profound interest in all monuments of the past. But in studying and beautifying the past, he never toys with the idea of a return to it; his admiration contains no trace of the tourist's condescension.

Prishvin has studied human character in the light of both national and professional peculiarities. The series of stories *Shoes* opens up an entire world of shoemakers, the history of their trade, their cities, their life and work. Excellent types of the craftsmen have been drawn, including artists and thieves. Professional pride and the successes of the craftsmen-artists are wonderfully shown.

So we see that Mikhail Prishvin's numerous short stories and sketches about animals and plants, about atmospheric phenomena and the seasons of the year, stories of the most diverse "heroes"—porcupines, mushrooms, thunderstorms, dogs, spiders, chaffinches, streams, nightingales, foxes, and so on—in reality have still another character; we find him in all the books from *Kolobok* to *The Storehouse of the Sun.* This hero is man, the master and moulder of life. He is the eyes and the heart, the mouth and the brain of living nature. He sees the world around us, gives it meaning, understands it, tells us about it, having one clear and definite aim—to remake the whole world in such a way that life should be good, happy, just and sensible.

In one of the chapters of the *Raindrops in the Forest* Mikhail Prishvin writes:

"In order to be able to describe a tree, a rock, a river, a butterfly on a flower or a shrewmouse living in the roots of a tree we need the life of man, not for purposes of comparison or for the personification of the tree, the stone or the animal, but as the inner motive force which is akin to the engine in a motor car."

Master of an extremely concise literary style, Prishvin yet possesses the art of developing the strength of words; it is characteristic that he makes very sparse use of punctuation marks—his words are so expressive that there is no need for them. His vocabulary includes the terminology of many industries and trades, of hunters and scientists, of various nationalities, regional idioms, reflects the broken Russian of Tatars, Kirghiz, and so forth. He is such a consummate master of word—that his "terminology" is never tiring or boring.

His desire to revive folklore finds expression in all his works: the poetic character which he gives to reality on the basis of his frank love of life is expressed through a number of external mediums—rhythm, repetition, metaphor—all of which are particularly emphasized in the titles of his stories (*In the Realm of Birds Unafraid of Man, The Storehouse of the Sun, The Root of Life*, and others).

He has no chosen landscapes; each one—whether it is the steppes of Kirghizia, or the Crimean sea coast, or the central Russian forests and fields—is described with such strength of intimate attention that it turns the story of a wolf's habits into a fairy tale, or travels through the Central Asian steppes into an oriental legend. But he is particularly successful in his descriptions of his native central Russian regions; in them he tells of the friendly forests with their sun-flooded clearings and little glades above the shallow rivers. Here the majestic mountains are replaced by little hills, the vast seas by calm, clear lakes, the boundless steppes by the wide meadows of gay, green grass. This region, which lies around Moscow, does not possess the beauty of grandeur. But these ancient Russian districts, where the greatness of Russia was born, hold a peculiar charm in their simple modesty, the beauty of soft, quiet colours, the wonder of the changing seasons, the charm of a nature, friendly and obedient to man. This beauty fills all Prishvin's books of recent years. In the description of these landscapes, devoid of monumentality but full of true poetry, the writer gives play to his special talent for understanding and portraying the living, organic world.

Prishvin hates the proverb "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," or as the Russian version goes: "A tit in the hand is better than a crane in the sky!" Man must have the crane in the hand as well! But before he can do so, he has to find "the home of the crane" and break "Kashchey's Chain," the symbol of both cosmic and social evil; that is how Prishvin understands realism and creates it:

"A true realist in my opinion is one who sees the dark and light sides equally but always marches towards the light, and only considers the road which has been travelled towards this light as reality."

Prishvin wrote in his *Raindrops in the Forest*:

"The fairy tale is a link between the future and the past. I write a fantasy on the White Sea Canal and I look at Kamenny Bridge in Moscow. I finish it and then I realize that a structure, a house that will be lived in, a bridge over which we shall walk, is a symbol of the future swallowing up the present; an historical epoch in which there is intensive building is really the creation of the future. My contribution to the work of construction is to write a story about it."

MYRA BLINKOVA

NEW BOOKS

THE DIARY OF A POETESS

Vera Inber. *Nearly Three Years. Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 295 pages.

Vera Inber's diary holds an important place among the documents that speak of the peerless heroism of Leningrad. These are the day by day notes of a poetess whose main vocation in life is to observe and to express in literature human behaviour and historical events. Vera Inber, who was in Leningrad from the beginning of the fascist assault upon the great city almost all the time until the siege was lifted, wrote a very fine poem about its defence, *The Pulkovo Meridian*, which like her diary, won the Stalin Prize. Impressions, events in the city, matters pertaining to the routine journalistic activities of the authoress are mingled in the diary with numerous notes about her work on the poem.

To the reader Vera Inber herself becomes one of the characters in the tragedy of Leningrad's siege. She describes the fearful air raids and continuous shelling. She tells of the starvation which stalked the city in the winter of 1942, of the cold which penetrated the houses, of the unprecedented suffering which did not, however, deter either young or old from assisting those who were defending the city.

Vera Inber has made skillful use of her impressions of events and the people she met and combined with them the texts of sketches she wrote for the foreign press. This is a fine example of the creative methods of a Soviet writer whose literary treatment of the material requires neither artificial embellishment nor deviation from the truth. A diary of impressions, as a rule, serves as a synopsis for a future work.

This diary received no special literary touching-up and contains not a shade of fiction. On certain days only a few lines were written. During her brief visit to Moscow on May 15, 1942, for example, the authoress wrote: "I can hardly write about Moscow. It's so different from Leningrad. What city is like Leningrad now? But it is here in Moscow that I feel how near and dear Leningrad has become to me. I want to live there, to work for Leningrad and share its fate."

Here is another note, written somewhat earlier in Leningrad, on January 31, 1942. These lines contain an observation conveying a vivid idea of life during the siege. "The pipes in the earth are bursting because the water they contain is immobile. The pumps can no longer push it through. When the water is in motion, the movement preserves it from the cold. But now the cold has placed its grip upon it and it is still, and bursting the pipes as it freezes."

In the crucial hungry days of Leningrad, in February, 1942, Vera Inber wrote: "I want to write as much as I want to eat." It is this eagerness to work, desire for activity and life which lends the diary a vigorous, optimistic, inspiring quality despite its tragic content.

DIAMOND SEEKERS

Nikolai Asanov. *The Magic Stone. Young Guard* Publishing House; Moscow. 240 pages.

Nikolai Asanav, a gifted short story writer who was a correspondent at the front, has now published his first novel, *The Magic Stone*. It bears the stamp of the journalist, the assembler of facts. The merit of the novel lies in its illustration of the tremendous scale of Soviet resistance to fascist aggression, of a resistance in which the whole nation took part.

The action is laid in the period following the Battle of Stalingrad and the place—a sparsely populated district of the North Urals (inhabited mainly by Ostyak hunters), where diamonds are obtained for the war industry.

The struggle for victory, waged by people of all Soviet nationalities and all walks of life turned this backwoods country into one of the most important sectors of the home front.

Asanov's hero, Nesterov, an officer who is a geologist by profession, was wounded at Stalingrad and discharged from the army. His sweetheart Varya wants him to go to Moscow, marry and settle down to scientific research in the shelter of a quiet laboratory. But instead of following her advice, he decides to continue his search for the "magic stone," a species of diamond for which he and his fiancée, also a geologist, had prospected before the war. In this manner he continues to participate in the Patriotic War, pitting his knowledge and efforts against the enemy.

Nesterov's researches are based on a theory he has worked out and which he firmly believes in. His only disappointment is that his beloved Varya fails to share his conviction. She is supported in her view by the head of the expedition, Palekhov, a career-seeker, who strives only for easy successes. But Nesterov finds people who do believe in him and have every confidence in his knowledge. Foremost among them is the secretary of the local Party committee, a man who knows the district and its specific conditions very well. Nesterov also receives unexpected support from the general under whose command he fought at Stalingrad. The Defence Committee had assigned this general to supervise the prospecting for diamonds required by the war industry.

Nesterov's persistence wins him other friends, among them the old Ostyak hunter in charge of a game preserve. A girl employed in the timber industry in the same area becomes his chief assistant.

Nesterov's conjectures prove to be correct when the minerals containing the diamonds are found deposited in the bed of an ancient river.

Asanov's plot is gripping and his description of nature fascinating. The author had at his disposal a wealth of facts that at times overflow the boundaries of his plot.

EHRENBURG'S POEMS

Ilya Ehrenburg. *The Tree*, a book of poems, 1936-1945. *Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 104 pages.

There is the breath of war in this collection of Ilya Ehrenburg's poems which contains the best of his verses written in the past seven years. Whereas Ehrenburg's newspaper articles tend to convey the heroic deeds of his fellow citizens, the wrathful voice of conscience, his verses are expressions of love and sorrow. And so, in his poems, Ehrenburg speaks in a voice that is quiet and subdued, yet most penetrating.

The book's title comes from the first poem, a landscape of the war. The grass lies flat and the last lark has deserted a solitary tree that remains on guard as though to defend the eminence alone. When the tree perishes in the shelling, the moment is as solemn and poignant as the death of a man.

This symbol is well expressive of the contents of the book. War's devastation of nature, of cities, art and culture, the creations of man, is the sombre theme of the poet.

The book begins with a series of poems dedicated to the Civil War in Spain. Barcelona, Madrid, the Spanish battlefield, the first open struggle against fascism are treated laconically. Then follows Paris, a peaceful city in 1938, but overrun and occupied by the Wehrmacht in the summer of 1940. The final poem, one of the best in the book, describes a city that has vanished and died, forgotten by all. The poet here compares occupied Paris with fallen Rome. The element of protest is not long lacking, as he exclaims "it was not for this that Balzac wrote," not to hear "the iron tread of alien troops." "It was not for this," repeated again and again, resounds like an oath, an appeal not to be subdued by the enemy, an appeal harbouring the conviction that Paris shall rise again.

A verse called *Forty-One* inaugurates a series of poems describing fascism's assault upon the Soviet land. The first poem is based on the hyperbole of nature at war against the invaders. "Against the fascists rose the bare and barren fields, rose all the great Russian land," wrote Ehrenburg.

Three poems might be mentioned as characteristic of the entire collection. In the first, *Kiev*, that city arises as a fighter, as a living thing, "Kiev rent apart its bridges and shed its stone," says the poet. The second, called *Europe*, is a hymn to European civilization which nurtured the poet and expresses his longing for the shaded halls of the Louvre, for Praxitiles. Mentioned side by side here are the names of the German poet Heinrich Heine and the Russian publicist Gleb Uspensky. *The Ghetto* is the third of these poems and it begins a series dealing with the most fearful and monstrous pages of World War II, the annihilation of the Jewish people by the fascists. These verses are biting, wrathful, imbued with a great sorrow.

The collection concludes with a poetic legacy in which Ehrenburg writes: "When I am gone you will remember the rustle of newspapers, the year that was terrible and yet dear to us all." He exhorts the reader to think then not only of the thunder of Stalingrad, but also of the barely audible whisper of the trees, of nature which he loves, which he looks on as a symbol of constancy and to which he has dedicated his verses.

SAGA OF THE NORTHERN SEA COASTS

Nikolai Wagner. *My Sea*, a novel. *Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 161 pages.

The shores of the White Sea in the north of Russia are inhabited by a group of Russians known as the Pomors or Seacoast Dwellers. They are the descendants of the old inhabitants of Novgorod, Suzdal and Vologda who settled here five or six centuries ago. Their customs and habits until recently were much like those of medieval Russia. The nearly impassable taiga had preserved them from external influences for centuries. It was only on rare occasions that a traveller reached them over land. Their only communion with the outer world was by sea, also the source of their livelihood. The secrets of their arduous occupation of hunting and fishing were handed down from father to son through the generations.

In his novel *My Sea*, Nikolai Wagner presents a truthful picture of the lives of these hard working people, their perpetual struggle to wrest a living from the sea.

The chief characters are the Gubas, a family of fishermen, and through their lives the reader is given a clear insight as to how the Soviet way of life penetrated to these remote regions.

Stressing the theme of his book, the author entitled his chapters: "The Grandfathers," "The Fathers," "The Children."

Raised in the Soviet era, the children are the first to depart from their native shores for life in a big city. They are educated in Soviet schools and colleges. Varnava Guba becomes a sea captain, Peter Guba, an engineer. Life takes a new turn on the northern seacoast itself. The fishermen unite in a collective. Their frail fishing craft are replaced by motorboats purchased with the money they have earned jointly.

In his chapter, "The Grandfathers," Wagner describes the old northern settlements. "The tiny huts were so deep rooted in the ground that they seemed to be squatting there." Life never hurried. Every day the fishermen went down to the sea to ply their dangerous trade. In every generation the sea claimed its sacrifice from the Guba family. But the family lived on, despite the struggle with the elements. In bold strokes, Wagner portrays Matvei Guba, a stoic in the face of the fisherman's unpredictable fate, industrious, courageous, and always lucky.

His sons are lucky, too, but, in a different way. All his life the father had never been away from his native settlement. Varnava Guba leaves for the big city as a youth. Years later he visits his father, but now he wears the uniform and stripes of a sea captain. Wagner touchingly describes the naive pride of the old fisherman.

"Old Matvei Guba desired that his son

should walk in the sight of all, to the pleasure of the people, to the delight of his friends and the pride of his father. Let him show himself, let him see Teriberka as it was now. There was plenty to see. There had been great changes in the years that Varnava had plied the seas."

The author skillfully conveys his own affection for the sea, the magnificent coastline and seascapes of the north and for the people who wrest their livelihood from this austere land.

A NOVEL ABOUT MONGOLIA

Alexander Rutter. *Arats. Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 262 pages.

Alexander Rutter's novel is devoted to events of the recent past in the Mongolian People's Republic.

Mongolia is located in the steppelands of Central Asia. Bordering on China and the U.S.S.R., its population is comprised mainly of nomad herdsmen (the "Arats" in Mongolian) moving over the steppes singly or in groups of families.

After centuries of oppression under the Manchurians, their own princes and Buddhist priesthood, after a long darkness, ignorance and blind submission, the Arats, led by the People's Revolutionary Party and their leaders Sukhe-Bator and Choibalsan, arose in 1921 and proclaimed the independence of the Mongolian People's Republic.

Once the bandits and the feudal lords were driven off, the Mongolians proceeded to build a new state, where the people had the supreme authority and were the possessors of the national wealth. Soon they erected their first cities, industrial enterprises, schools, hospitals, theatres and club houses.

The way to progress, however, was still obstructed by the survivals of feudalism and a most dangerous enemy in the shape of the Lamas who had enmeshed the whole of Mongolia in their network of monasteries.

The plot of Alexander Rutter's novel is based on the events in a Mongolian "aiman" (region) during the first years of the Mongolian republic.

Supported by a wealth of documentary material and revealing a keen knowledge of Mongolian history and customs, the novel depicts the executives and statesmen of the Mongolian People's Republic emerging in the struggle for the new life. A prominent figure in the book is the present premier of the republic, Choibalsan, who succeeded Sukhe-Bator after his untimely death. The main characters are Gombajap, head of the Arats in Hotton, Jamtso, leader of the revolutionary youth, the teacher Sodnom, the regimental commander Tsyven of the revolutionary army, and many others who became the builders of the new Mongolia after the revolution.

The author is most effective in describing the elder Arat generation who found it so difficult to shake off the influence of the Lamas, but yet struck out boldly for the new life. Such were the father of Gombajap, Ama, and his friend Puntsuk, the elders of Hotton.

An important place in the novel is devoted to the Mongolian women, the most interesting and attractive of whom is Dulma, Gombajap's wife, who fights side by side with her husband for the new system.

The counter-revolutionary uprising headed by the Japanese spy Bavo is vividly portrayed. The counter-revolutionaries aimed to overthrow the power of the people, to recover the land and cattle and restore the feudal regime under the protection of the Japanese. The novel describes the disintegration of the Lama class in the struggle, showing how the petty clericals withdraw from the anti-people's movement instigated by their superiors and how they finally join the people.

At a great sacrifice, the Arats suppress the uprising, rout the nests of the counterrevolution in the monasteries and establish their own power.

Against this background of social and historical processes, the author colourfully depicts the life and customs of the nomad dwellers of Mongolia.

MEMOIRS OF AN ACTRESS

Vera Michurina-Samoilova. *Sixty Years in Art. Art* Publishing House. Moscow. 224 pages.

People's artist of the U.S.S.R. Vera Michurina-Samoilova, authoress of *Sixty Years in Art*, is one of the foremost actresses on the Russian stage.

A scion of the Samoilovs, a famous theatrical family, who have been on the Russian stage for an entire century, she was the contemporary of many great actors around the turn of the century and may be considered as having helped to found Soviet theatrical art.

Vera Michurina-Samoilova's memoirs, therefore, read like a chronicle of the Russian theatre, beginning with the eighties of the last century. The account of her long years in art and her recollections of illustrious contemporaries are unaffected and remarkably precise.

Her childhood revolved about her grandfather, a famous actor of the Alexandrinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, and her mother and aunt, well-known actresses of the same theatre.

At home the very air was pervaded with art. The Russian writers Turgenev and Nekrasov, the artists Bryulov and Aivazovsky, the composers Glinka and Dargomyzhsky came frequently to enjoy the comfort and hospitality of the Samoilov home.

The "Samoilov school," a school of truthful perception, shaped the talent of the future actress from early childhood.

Her sincerity, vitality, superb technique and histrionic talent amazed the audience in the very first appearance of the young actress in 1885.

In 1886 Vera Michurina-Samoilova made her debut on the stage of the Alexandrinsky Theatre, now the Pushkin Drama Theatre, where she has acted in more than 200 roles.

Some of her most successful roles have been as Ranevskaya (*Cherry Orchard* by Chekhov), Lady Milford (*Kabal und Liebe* by Schiller), Natalia Petrovna (*A Month in the Country* by Turgenev), Mrs. Chiveley

(*An Ideal Husband* by Oscar Wilde), Fru Alvig (*Ghosts* by Ibsen), Gurmyzhskaya (*Forest* by Ostrovsky), and Khlestova (*Wit Works Woe* by Griboyedov).

Like all great Russian actresses, she reveals the entire background of the heroines she impersonates.

"I never have and never shall act a role," she observes in her memoirs. "I have always acted and shall continue to act the play." The brilliant irony inherent in her talent has enabled her to present penetrating portraits, to find those details that unerringly expose the negative sides of the character she impersonates.

In her memoirs Vera Michurina-Samoilova writes of Russian masters and the best European artists whom she knew: Duse, Regan, Sarah Bernhardt, Salvini, and others.

Her teachers and friends in the theatre were "the king of Russian laughter" Varlamov, the brilliant actress Savina, Davydov, Strelskaya, Strepetova, Dalmatov, Sazonov, Pisarev and other stage personalities.

Long years of friendship bound her to the great Russian tragedienne, Ermolova.

In Paris, Michurina-Samoilova, an Officier de l'Academie Francaise since 1900, met Mounet-Sully, Barthet and Coquelin.

The final chapters of her memoirs, bringing the book up to modern days, describe the defence of Leningrad against the Germans, in which she participated.

Simply and truthfully she describes life in the besieged city, the people unwavering in their certainty of victory, the courage which won out over all hardships and terrors of the blockade.

Refusing to leave the city, the old actress devoted all her energy and her activities to the defence.

By the flickering light of a kerosene wick in her ice-cold apartment she wrote scores and scores of letters to the front. Under fire she hurried to the broadcasting station, visited army units, tended the wounded, spoke at meetings, organized actor brigades, helped wherever she could by word and deed. "I was happy to see that I was necessary to the people, to the city, to all my comrades."

"The war and the siege," she says in her memoirs, "enabled me even better to realize the importance of the theatre in our lives. In the city where a crust of bread was literally worth its weight in gold, tickets to musical comedies were frequently exchanged for bread at the theatre doors. Returning to the city from the front for a single evening, the soldiers were ready to give up their morsel of bread for a ticket to the theatre."

NEW POEMS

Pimen Panchenko. *Road of Youth.* Translated from the Belorussian. 101 pages.

Dmitri Klimov. *Suzdal Soil.* 68 pages.

Lev Chernomortsev. *Songs of Siberia.* 90 pages.

Soviet Writer Publishing House. Moscow.

Different though the life stories, temperaments and gifts of the three authors under review may be, there is a definite resemblance between their collections of verses. For one thing, they reflect the experiences of the young Soviet generation. Like so many others of their age, Pimen Panchenko, Lev Chernomortsev and Dmitri Klimov studied in the big cities, worked on the projects of the Stalin five-year plans and witnessed events which transformed their country—the collectivization of agriculture, the appearance of new industrial centres. Moreover, they were not bystanders, but took an active part in these developments. The years of the Patriotic War found them at the front and each has every right to say in his verse that he has shared the joys and sorrows of his native land.

The Belorussian poet Pimen Panchenko has most appropriately entitled his group of pre-war poems *Certainty.* These verses indeed express complete certainty in the correctness of his country's path, and in the strength of his feelings.

The verses in a second group by the same author are dated 1941-1945 and here the poet writes of the suffering of his native Belorussia under the iron heel of the invader. The same deep love for his native land is found in Dmitri Klimov's *Suzdal Soil.*

This area between the Oka and Volga rivers, one of the oldest centres of Russia's statehood and culture, has a rich historical background. In his group of poems entitled *Native Land* the poet recalls how the Suzdal land was laid waste by the hordes of Khan Batu, the internecine strife between the princes, the serfdom endured by his forefathers. With great understanding he draws the rural life. The poems *The Smith, The Cobbler, The Watchman, The Fashion Fan, Outing* and *Jolly Herdsman* describe life in a collective farm village, the new life on the old Suzdal soil. Klimov's verses are remarkable for their vivid descriptions and the poet's gift of capturing essential details.

Lev Chernomortsev's *Songs of Siberia,* include verses describing the Siberians at war, their iron endurance, fearlessness and skill in battle.

In verses that reflect man's struggle against the elements the poet depicts the austere landscape and the able, staunch men of the north, the taiga wilderness, the forest animals and the life of the Siberian hunters.

POETRY OF SOVIET AZERBAIJAN

Poets of Azerbaijan. Translated into the Russian. *Soviet Writer* Publishing House. Moscow. 110 pages.

This anthology contains the verses of the older generation as well as of the young Azerbaijan poets who have only recently made their literary debuts.

The verses of Samed Vurgun attest to this poet's predilection for the epic and philosophical genres.

In his poem *Philosophy of Life* he summarizes his ideas on the eternal struggle between good and evil. "The generations move on, but happiness remains a game, elusive to

man." Vurgun speaks of the new times in which he lives as of "the dawn of happiness."

In his well-known poem *Azerbaijan* Vurgun unfolds a vast panorama of his native region, the cloud-capped mountain peaks and green valleys, the indolent flow of the Aras, the cities vibrant with life and collective farm orchards heavy with fruit. . . Writing of his homeland, the poet says: "Hardship has silvered your hair, but now all is past, and happiness is here to stay."

Of himself the poet speaks as "a son of Azerbaijan."

Devoting his verses to universal themes of love and desire for liberty, he preserves at the same time the national characteristics of his poetry. One finds this in the oriental luxury of image and the chanting swing of his rhythms.

The verses of Suleiman Rustam, one of the founders of modern Azerbaijan poetry, are remarkable for their political perspicacity and clear-cut, sound consciousness. Rustam is a man of the people, the son of a Baku smith, and was therefore well acquainted with the humble conditions of the oppressed Azerbaijanian toilers under tsarist colonial rule. The poverty and sorrows of his youth are described in his verses:

"I lived not in a house with halls of marble,
Nor rested myself on a feather bed.
To our hard lot was I from youth inbred."

Suleiman Rustam published his first collection of poems in 1927 under the title *From Sadness to Joy.*

The Socialist Revolution in Azerbaijan had brought forth a new type of man, a civic leader and intellectual closely bound up with the people. Such men and women were Suleiman Rustam's favourite heroes and heroines. He watched them eagerly, followed their progress and described their sentiments in his verses. Sympathy for the new life evolving from the struggle against all that was retrograde, the thoughts and feelings of the young builders of this new life—such are the subjects of Suleiman Rustam's lyrics.

The anthology also contains the verses of Osman Saryvelli, a poet distinguished by his vivid imagination.

The translations of the verses in the collection are by Boris Pasternak, Nikolai Aseyev, Adelina Aralskaya, Vladimir Derzhavin and others.

NEW BOOKS OF THE POETS

Margarita Aligher. *Your Victory*, a poem. 98 pages.

Vadim Shefner. *The Suburb*. Verses. 102 pages.

Constantine Murzidi. *Sun Over the Urals.* Verses. 104 pages.

Soviet Writer Publishing House. Moscow.

Margarita Aligher, in her new autobiographical poem, represents her own life as typical of the life of her generation. The poetess, who was graduated from the Institute of Literature two years before the war, made a successful debut with two collections of verse. At the beginning of the war she wrote the poem *Zoya*, dedicated to Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, the Moscow schoolgirl who joined the partisans and met her death at German hands. This work earned Margarita Aligher a Stalin Prize.

In her new lyrico-epic poem, *Your Victory*, Margarita Aligher describes the early youth of the heroine. Addressing the women of her own age she makes live again the great construction projects of the first five-year plans. Deep patriotism pervades the poem throughout. "A homeland," says Margarita Aligher, "you do not choose. Like father and like mother, a homeland comes to you." Having passed through momentous events and experienced the bitterness of the enormous losses in the war which took the man she loved, the heroine maintains that her youth is not yet over, that she is not yet ready to rest. "Not all paths have been travelled," she writes, "not all problems have been solved." To her, youth represents energy, the urge to achieve, and she believes, therefore, that only those who are avidly young will win out in this world.

Whereas Margarita Aligher draws the motives of courage, patriotism and all-conquering youth from lyrical material in her own life story, Vadim Shefner's inspiration is drawn from quite another source. His collection of wartime lyrics entitled *The Suburb* sounds the theme of love which at times predominates.

"The star of hope and parting" in his concluding poem, *At the Campfire*, indeed shines over the verses in the collection. Even when he deals with the pictures of war as in *Ramparts*, *Pines of Kirka-Muola*, *Old Cathedral*, and others, his verses are pervaded with the lyricism of love and this lends a pleasant, familiar air to his poems.

Constantine Murzidi is a poet of the Urals. The Ural mountain country does not merely figure in his work as a geographical background, but is actually the main subject. The poet describes the beauty of the Urals, the splendid people who live there, their industry and creative work. Murzidi's verses reflect pride in the role played by the industry of the Urals in the victory over the German fascists.

The poem *Foreman* describes a young worker at a machine tool, a man as "important for the war as an army is to a general." The poem *Sun Over the Urals* describes the ruddy glow of the molten metal made at Urals' plants. *Song of a Urals' Tank* which the poet has written in the form of a ballad describes the war record of a tank built in the Urals. Murzidi's poem *Mountain Bride* is a poetical legend skillfully interwoven with modernity.

Sun Over the Urals, a collection of verses vividly reflecting the local colour of that vast region, attests to the fine poetic gifts of its author.

NEWLY TRANSLATED BOOKS

Honorê de Balzac. *Lost Illusions. State Literary Publishing House.* Moscow. 668 pages.

Sean O'Casey. *I Knock at the Door. State Literary Publishing House.* Moscow. 392 pages.

Lion Feuchtwanger. *Simona. State Literary Publishing House.* Moscow. 219 pages.

Adam Mickiewicz. *Selected Poems. Children's Publishing House.* Moscow. 102 pages.

Sholom Aleikhem. *Tevye the Milkman. State Publishing House of Jewish Literature "Der Emes."* Moscow. 159 pages.

Soviet publishing houses have recently released several Russian translations of foreign works, three of them old favourites in new editions: Balzac's *Lost Illusions*, Adam Mickiewicz's *Poems* and Sholom Aleikhem's novel, *Tevye the Milkman.* They have also published the first Russian editions of Lion Feuchtwanger's wartime novel *Simona* and of two novels by Sean O'Casey.

Balzac's popularity in the Soviet Union has prompted the *State Literary Publishing House* to put out a new edition of one of his best known works *Lost Illusions.* Previous editions are already classed as "rare books," so great is the demand for this novel, although in the Soviet Union it has been republished time and again.

Lost Illusions has been jointly translated into Russian by I. Tatarinova, N. Yakovleva and M. Kazas with commentaries by the Soviet Balzac scholar B. Griftsov and footnotes by E. Korsh. The illustrations are by V. Vakidin.

The novels by the contemporary Irish writer Sean O'Casey, *I Knock at the Door* and *Pictures in the Hallway* have been published in one volume, under the title of the first book. These are part of a large work, as yet uncompleted and apparently autobiographical.

Sean O'Casey's book has been translated by a group including the distinguished Soviet translator and student of English and American literature, I. Kashkin.

The co-translators of this book have managed to convey to the Russian reader the most subtle nuances of the author's highly individual and colourful style.

One of Lion Feuchtwanger's recent works, *Simona,* a novel dealing with the struggle of the French patriots against the German occupants, was translated from manuscript by I. Gorkina.

The works of the great Polish poet, Adam Mickiewicz, have been translated into Russian by famous poets and translators since the time of Pushkin.

A new edition of Mickiewicz's selected works has been published in the *School Library* series. It includes the poet's best ballads *Budris and His Sons* and *Wojewoda* in Pushkin's translation and *Switezjanka,* translated by the poet A. Fet. Also included are the poem *Grazyna* rendered into Russian by the contemporary translator, A. Kovalensky, fragments from the poem *Konrad Wallenrod*, some in Pushkin's translation and others by the Soviet poet, N. Aseyev, as well as S. Mar's translation of *Pan Tadeusz.* Mickiewicz's longer poems, among them selected verses from the *Crimean Sonnets,* have also been published. The translations are by the Russian classical poets, M. Lermontov, A. Maikov, and V. Bryusov and the contemporary translators N. Aseyev, A. Kovalensky, S. Mar, O. Rumer, G. Obalduyev and I. Vorobyeva.

The preface on the life and works of Adam Mickiewicz has been written by the Ukrainian poet M. Rylsky, the editor of the volume. The notes are by N. Grekov.

The book is handsomely illustrated with woodcuts by G. Echeistov, which recreate the background of the Polish poet's works.

The works of the great Jewish writer Sholom Aleichem, are exceedingly popular in the U.S.S.R. A new Russian edition of one of the writer's best works, *Tevye the Milkman,* has been issued by the *State Publishing House of Jewish Literature.* The story is that of a family living in a Jewish provincial town in the Ukraine before the Revolution. The Russian translation is by M. Shambadal with illustrations by G. Inger.

THE LIFE OF DANTE

Alexei Dzhivelegov. *Dante: His Life and Work. State Literary Publishing House.* Moscow. 410 pages.

Dante's popularity in Russia dates back to the beginning of the 19th century, when the poets Zhukovsky and Batyushkov introduced the immortal Italian to their countrymen. Pushkin took a profound interest in Dante's poetry and did much to encourage interest in the poet in Russia.

This interest in Dante and his epoch, chiefly in *The Divine Comedy* resulted in numerous translations of the poet's works into Russian, as well as research by Russian philologists and students of literature.

The first Russian translator of Dante was D. Min. Later the poet's works were rendered into the Russian by Golovanov, Fyodorov, Minayev, Chyumina, Zarudny, Gorbov and Efros.

Recent years (1940-1946) have produced the distinguished translation of the *Divine Comedy* by the Soviet poet, Mikhail Lozinsky, which won the Stalin Prize in 1945.

Research on Dante began somewhat later than the translation of his works. A significant contribution to "Dantology" was made by the prominent scholar of Romanic philology, Alexander Veselovsky. Among the well-known Dante researches were those of Kudryavtsev (1887), Shepelyevich (1891), Evlakhov (1914-1920) and others. In the Soviet period Dante has become a subject of thorough investigation by Marxist scholars. Anatoli Lunacharsky and Maxim Gorky did much to popularize Dante's works in this country.

A. K. Dzhivelegov, corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of the U. S. S. R.,

who is one of the most outstanding Soviet scholars and specialists of the Renaissance period in literature, has subjected the great poet's life and work and his background to critical analysis.

Dzhivelegov's book *Dante: His Life and Work* first made its appearance before the war; in it the author summed up the results of his researches covering a period of many years.

In the present new edition the book has been considerably elaborated by a wealth of new facts which have come to light in recent years. As the writer says in his preface, the second edition is in fact a new work. Almost all quotations from the *Comedy* in this edition are given in the new translation by M. Lozinsky and verses from *Vita Nuova* as translated by A. Efros.

The eight chapters of the book describe Florence and Italy before Dante, the poet's childhood and youth, his participation in social life and political struggle, years of exile, his last years and death, as well as his greatest work *The Divine Comedy*. Dzhivelegov traces the relations between Dante and his contemporaries.

Scholars will welcome this book and laymen interested in the great milestones of world literature will read it with enjoyment, thanks to its simple and vivid style.

The book is supplemented by a short bibliography of Russian and foreign literature on Dante, reference publications, general courses on the history of Italian literature, monographs on the poet, Russian translations of his works and Russian researches on Dante.

THE GREAT RUSSIAN ACTOR

Vitali Vilenkin. *I. M. Moskvin on the Stage of the Moscow Art Theatre. Published by the Moscow Art Theatre Museum.* Moscow. 218 pages.

An entire epoch in the Russian theatre is associated with the name of Ivan Moskvin, the great Russian actor who passed away on February 16 last year.

The premiere performance at the newly-opened Moscow Art Theatre in 1898 also launched the career of Moskvin who created a forceful and truthful image in his role of Tsar Fyodor in Alexei Tolstoy's tragedy *Tsar Fyodor Ioannovich*.

Moskvin's warm talent was deeply national in character. His sincerity never failed to move the spectator and inevitably struck a responsive chord of heartfelt understanding in his audiences.

Vitali Vilenkin dwells on the main phases of Moskvin's work at the Moscow Art Theatre. The reader, as it were, is ushered into the creative laboratory of the actor, who penetrated the inner world of his heroes from Dostoyevsky's "poor folk" to the Russian popular hero Pugachev.

"A conscience that is plagued by falsehood, injustice and evil, a conscience of a worthy human being, such is the finest side of Moskvin's histrionic art," writes Vilenkin. "In his most important roles he proved himself a true artist of emotion, of all-conquering passion, a profound interpreter of the human spirit, a seer of human tragedy particularly of the kind which is jealously guarded from prying eyes, but is suddenly disclosed in an erruption of outraged feeling. Another aspect of his art was his brilliant satire, no less merciless and forceful."

The role of Tsar Fyodor, as rendered by Moskvin hundreds of times over a period of forty years, became a classic on the Russian stage. Though they saw it again and again, spectators were deeply moved by "the unutterable loneliness of this noble soul, of this human being who sought so sincerely to soothe, to reconcile everyone."

Vilenkin recalls Moskvin in his greatest roles. The fabulous and yet very real Bobyl (*Snow Maiden* by Ostrovsky), the almost grotesque Epikhodov (*Cherry Orchard* by Chekhov), Zagoretsky (*Wit Works Woe* by Griboyedov), as performed by Moskvin, were characters never to be forgotten.

The actor was particularly drawn to the heroes of Gorky, Chekhov and Tolstoy and that was why he was able so faithfully to reflect the troubled soul of Fyodor Protasov in Tolstoy's *Living Corpse*.

An important event in the history of the Russian theatre was Moskvin's appearance in the role of Captain Snegirev in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. "This role," remarks Vilenkin, "fully displayed Moskvin's talent as a tragedian, the magnitude of his soul overflowing with pity for man and charged with wrath over the humbled and sorely tried human being. The pitiful figure of that bullied "rag" of a Snegirev acquires a shining dignity in conversation with Alyosha."

In addition to his tragic roles, Moskvin created such acidly satirical figures as Foma Opiskin in *Stepanchikovo Village* by Dostoyevsky, the savage Khlynov in Ostrovsky's *Ardent Heart*, the governor in Gogol's *Inspector General*, and others.

Moscow theatre-goers will always remember Moskvin in his last role as the merchant Pribytkov in Ostrovsky's *The Last Sacrifice*.

A special chapter of the book is devoted to Moskvin's art in depicting minor roles. Those who saw his brilliant miniatures cannot help but remember the wise words of Stanislavsky: "There are no small roles, only small actors."

Vilenkin concludes his book with quotations from Moskvin's autobiography.

"And there you have all my life," wrote Moskvin at the end of his reserved account of himself. "All my life is in my work, in my art. I have lived a long time, have seen, heard and experienced much. That perhaps is why I am so sensitive to the difference between life in old Russia and life in the great Land of the Soviets, a difference which must be evident to every person who has seen the emptiness and poverty of the old life and the wonderful colour of the new."

HISTORY OF GREEK LITERATURE

History of Greek Literature, Vol. I. *Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R.* Moscow-Leningrad. 484 pages.

The Institute of World Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. has published the first volume of the *History of Greek Luterature*—covering the period from the earliest records to the end of the Byzantine Empire. This work was written and edited by a group of outstanding Soviet savants headed by Academician Sergei Sobolevsky. Rejecting the strict chronological order, the authors in their first volume have encompassed the epic poems, lyrics and drama of the classical era, extending from the 6th or 5th century B. C. to the latter years of the 4th century A. D., and concluded with a review of the comedies of Aristophanes. The second volume will cover the prose literature of the same period: history, philosophy and oratory.

The introductory chapter defines the principles pursued by the authors in their researches. They are striving for a systematic exposition of antique and Byzantine literature by the Marxist method. Their aim is to produce a work that is scientific and yet free of encumbrances to the reader who does not belong to the narrow circle of specialists in the field. The stress is laid on an easily understandable handling of the material. Redundant detail and hypotheses have therefore been omitted.

Emphasizing the importance of antique literature today, the authors cite the well-known words of Friedrich Engels: "We shall be compelled, in philosophy as in many other spheres, to return constantly to the exploits of that small people whose gifts and activities secured them a place in the history of human development such as can be claimed by no other nation." Another quotation is from Karl Marx who wrote of the immortal achievements of Greek art.

Volume one of the *History* devotes special chapters to the effect of the literary legacy of antiquity upon subsequent epochs. Considerable space is given to its role in Russian literature and the literatures of other nationalities of the Soviet Union. Particularly interesting is the chapter on *Homer in Russian Literature*, from the first echoes of antiquity found in Slav manuscripts of the 11th and 12th centuries to the latest translations by Soviet philologists and poets.

The volume is well illustrated with photographs of Greek antiquities.

Lermontov

By P. Kochalovsky

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PYOTR KONCHALOVSKY

(Fifty Years as a Painter)

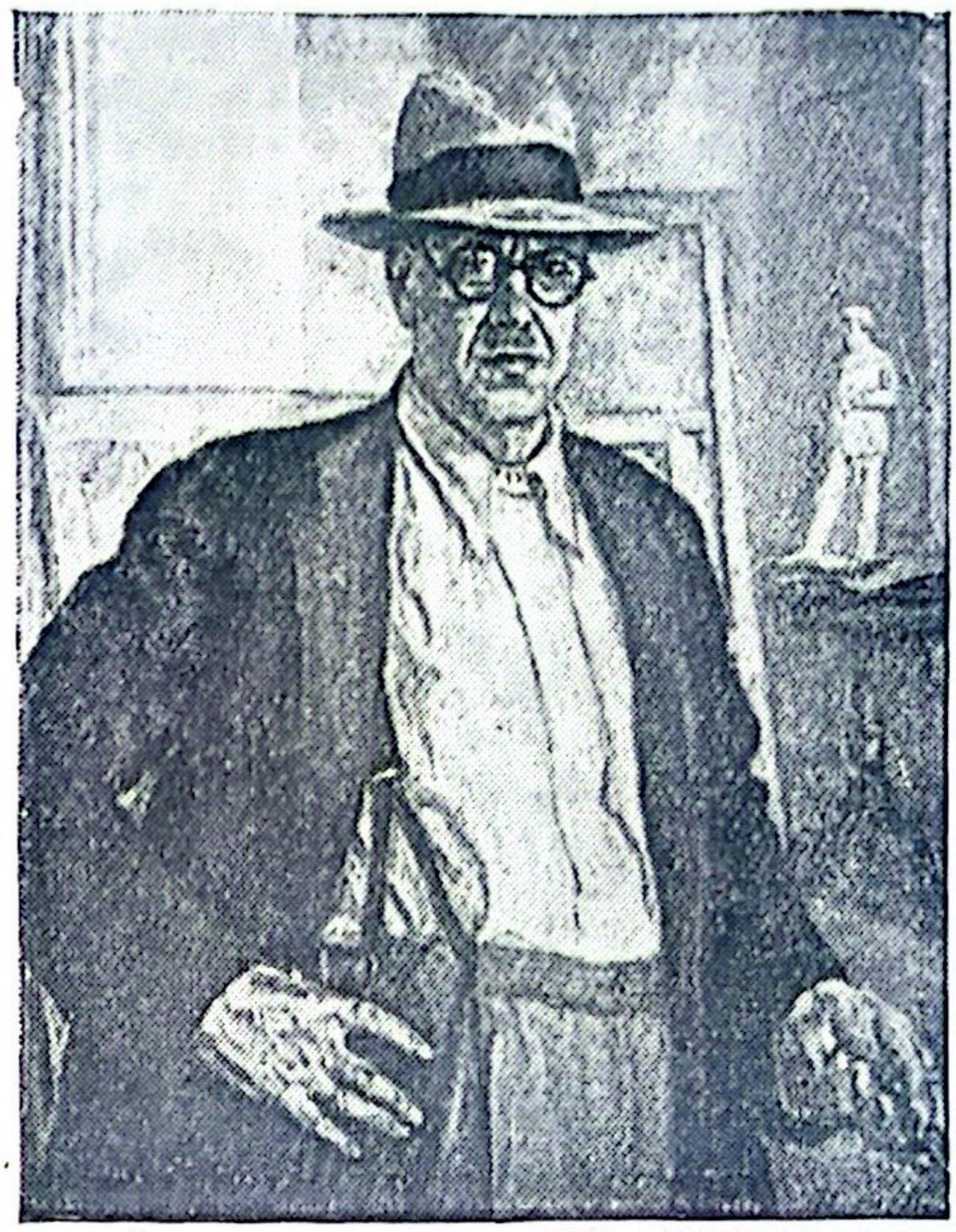
Lively discussions have frequently arisen around Pyotr Konchalovsky's paintings. Although the young Konchalovsky was a rebel, a painter who abhorred routine and was always seeking something new, there were critics who reproached him for adherence to the French school of painting, while others, on the contrary, found something "crudely Russian, fertile, and Moscovite" underlying his art.

As long ago as 1912 the French painter Valloton spoke of the national, Slavonic character of Konchalovsky's paintings. In a preface to the catalogue of Konchalovsky's Paris exhibition in 1926, De Monzie called him a symbol of the indomitable spirit of the Soviet Union.

It is no longer necessary to prove that Konchalovsky is one of the greatest masters of the Russian school of painting, despite the fact that in his youth he drank at various founts of art. Konchalovsky's early wanderings include the Julien Academy in Paris, the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts, an interest in new Western trends and personal association with Vrubel, Serov, Korovin, a passion for Cezanne and a period when he came under the influence of Surikov. Young Konchalovsky's art developed out of a strange mixture of advanced Russian traditions and the new and latest trends in West-European painting.

More than fifty years have elapsed since Konchalovsky first took up the palette and brush. He devoted his early creative effort to formal searches and intimate subjects: his home, his family, things from every-day life, landscapes—these were the subjects that filled most of his canvases. However, Konchalovsky was destined to become an artist of our own day, which is natural when we consider the painter's great vitality and sincerity and the scope of his talent.

Konchalovsky did not at once become a realist. His early works (1907-1912) reveal his debt to Van Gogh, Matisse and Cezanne. During this difficult period, when Russian painting was stagnant, the young artist was seeking the new art, but was still unaware of what he himself wanted or would be able to tell the world through his works. All of Konchalovsky's groping in those years centred around form and ignored content. Although he painted his *Garden* and *Autumn Morning* in the manner of the impressionists, he did not become an impressionist. His *Girl at the Fireplace*, *Palms* and *Ivy* savoured of Van Gogh's decorative mosaics, but the morbid individualism of the Dutchman was alien to the wholesome world outlook of the young Russian painter.



Self-portrait. *By P. Konchalovsky*

Konchalovsky worshipped longest at the shrine of Cezanne but he produced his finest work not because of Cezanne but in spite of him.

His passion for Cezanne was not just following the fashion. To Konchalovsky and many of his contemporaries, Cezanne was the apostle of novelty, the father of modern painting.

Cezanne's great tragedy was that he did not live in a period which could furnish him with a guiding idea powerful enough to give his search for form a real meaning. Before the October Revolution, however, like other Russian artists, Konchalovsky went abroad to search for the lodestar of new painting which he could not find in his own country.

During that period Konchalovsky travelled and painted in France, Spain and Italy, visited every art gallery and, of course, stood in awe of the great masters of the past. The works of Titian and Tintoretto, Raphael, Veronese, Rembrandt and Velasquez were imprinted on his memory forever. He was later to turn to them as easily and naturally as he did to the direct impressions accummulated in his busy life.

Konchalovsky's "Spanish" period is of indubitable biographical interest. He went to Spain in 1910 together with Surikov, attended life classes and bull fights and listened attentively to Surikov's occasional remarks on art. In Konchalovsky's Spanish

work there is sheer vivisection in harsh sombre tones. In Spain, too, his living, direct impressions were sacrificed to the search for what seemed to him a new, formal expressiveness.

Konchalovsky's best "Spanish" study—*Bull Fight*—is interesting in this respect. "Initially," the artist says, "I painted the *Bull Fight* entirely realistically. Surikov thought the painting remarkable for its life-like portrayal, but I was not satisfied with it. I wanted to make the bull more characteristic, not as it is usually seen, but as a thing of primitive art, like a toy... And I repainted it like that. I remember Surikov thought that I had made a mistake and regretted the former bull, while I thought my new bull was better."

In the same manner as *Bull Fight* Konchalovsky painted the portrait of a bull-fight spectator, the head of a matador and some Spanish dancers. On the artist's return to Moscow these canvases were shown in the first exhibition of the "Jack of Diamonds Society," the so-called *Cezannistes Russes.*

Incidentally, despite the views held in common the artists of the "Jack of Diamonds" group from the very first really differed in their points of view on art. Such painters as M. Larionov and N. Goncharova were more concerned with overthrowing the old painting than creating the new. One cannot fail to see the difference between the tendency which led these artists to the "Ass' tail" school of art, and the tentative groping for a material expression of subject matter which subsequently—in the Soviet period—opened the way to realism for Konchalovsky, Mashkov, Osmyorkin, Kuprin, Rozhdestvensky and even Lentulov.

Newspaper critics called the first exhibition of the "Jack of Diamonds" a "lunatic asylum" and "the daubing of provincial side shows," and these none-too-parliamentary appraisals contained a good deal of truth. Konchalovsky was by no means the most extreme of the "Jack of Diamonds" painters. Their hostility to the triviality of official academicism and the refined works of the "Art World" group, on the one hand, and their endeavour to communicate the tangibility of objects on the other, drove them to such extremes of formalism as the still life studies composed of actual objects glued on to the canvas: such methods only made the group ridiculous.

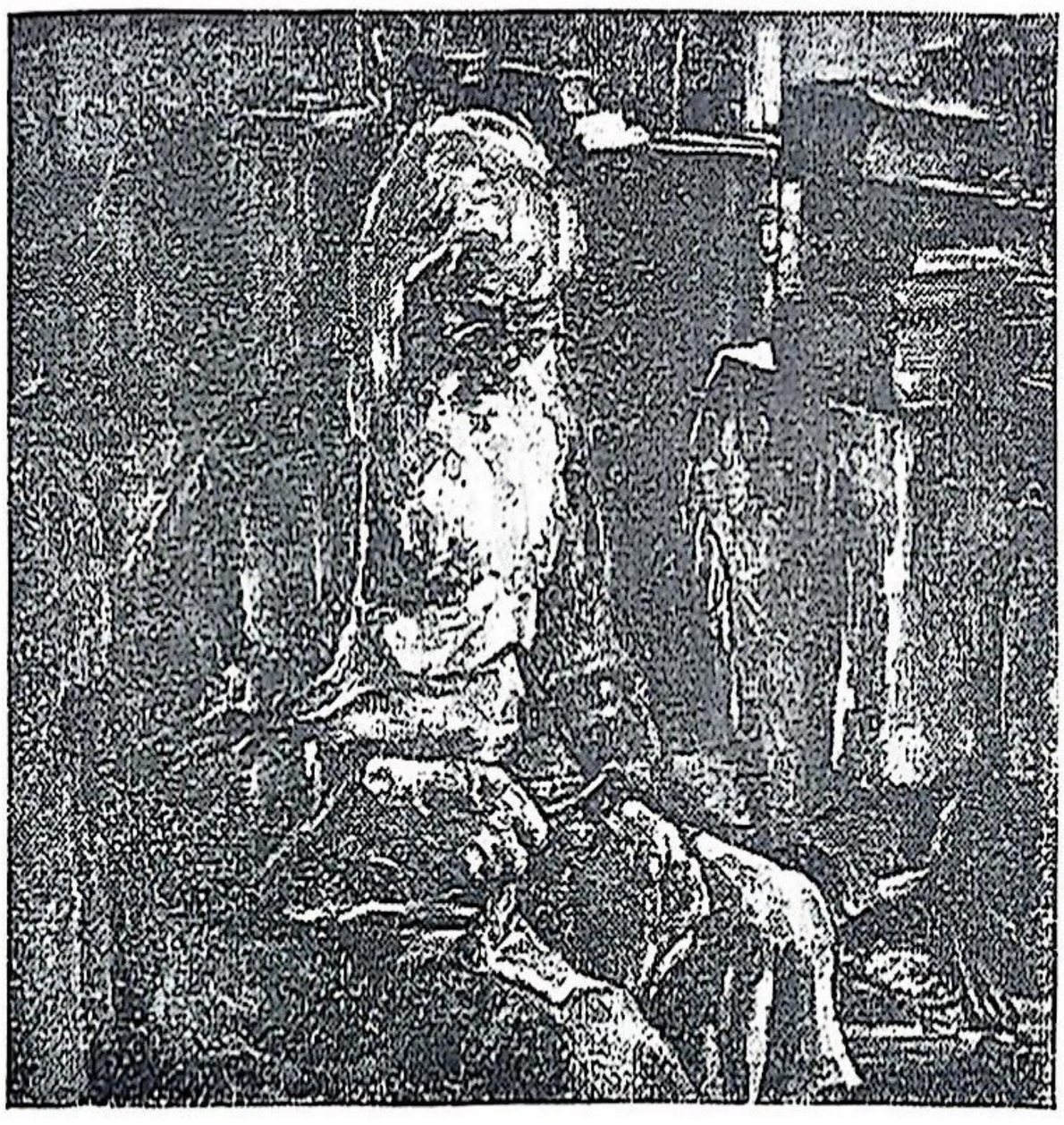
Extravagant searchings for "materiality" gave Konchalovsky an interest in sign-board painting, in primitively generalized form and crude colours. His 1912 self-portraits and his *Artist's Model* developed cubist "experiments"—the logical outcome of the creative methods of Cezanne's disciples. It seemed that Konchalovsky had to reach the point where art borders on the ridiculous before the real depiction of life would become the principal aim of his painting: this new phase followed the interruption in his work during World War I.

In fifty years Konchalovsky has produced more than 1,500 oil paintings which fall into three genres—still lifes, landscapes and portraits.

For many years *nature morte* was the touchstone of Konchalovsky's art. In this genre he made his biggest blunders and attained his greatest perfection.

Still life is most frequently the subject of formal experiment. Inanimate objects may be broken up into their component parts and juggled into any abstract combinations with comparative ease. It is also indubitable that the work of an artist on a still life has the least connection with the spiritual side of painting. This view is illustrated by such Konchalovsky's pictures as *Samovar, Palette and Paints, Stove, Cut-Glass* painted in 1912-1917, whose constructivist character had very little in common with the real nature of things. He made use of the notorious cubistic "analysis" which put objects into opposition with each other, broke up their forms and piled up the fragments in a conventional geometric composition.

Trained in the rules of this painting, the eye and hand of the artist behaved similarly when the object depicted was man. Compassionate people called *Portrait of Yakulov* painted by Konchalovsky in 1910 "a victim of street traffic." Only many years later, when he rejected Cezanne did Konchalovsky relinquish his still-life treat-



At Work. *By P. Konchalovsky*

ment of man. The cubist vivisection of objects isolated from their connection with the surrounding reality was supplanted by a concrete sensuous depiction of the objective wealth of the universe. The persistent urge to communicate to painting the harmony of being, to make the picture an incarnation of nature, helped Konchalovsky overcome the heavy inertness of Cezanne and become a Soviet realist.

Konchalovsky's best still-life works in the past twenty-five years have a true-to-life quality and execution which comes close to the work of the Flemish and Dutch 17th-century masters. Such of his splendid still lifes as *Meat, Grapes and Pomegranates, Tobacco Leaves, Silver, Green Wine Glass, Rabbits* and *Fox* are of incontestible museum value.

It would be incorrect to presume that Konchalovsky was merely imitating and resurrecting the art of the past. The traditions of the classics of realistic art are important to him only in so far as he finds in them a harmony of form and content, a perfection of execution, as eternal truth common to mankind.

Love for the substance of the world, the "eternally green tree of life," distinguishes Konchalovsky's art. Could he, then, limit himself to still life in the narrow sense of the word and remain in the realm of dead things? A more extensive conception of this genre, a deeper meaning of the English word "still life" describes Konchalovsky's work much more fully and precisely than the French term *nature morte*. He painted pictures of flowering apple trees, peaches, garden lilac, roses, trophies of the hunt, healthful and appetizing food—all that bears on the poetry of plenty so dear to the heart and brush of the artist. And Konchalovsky painted these objects time and again, returning to them continuously, year after year, season after season, in dozens of variants.

The artist studied thoroughly and lovingly the "still" life of nature with all its wealth of modest meaning—*Turkey Hen With Her Brood, Woodcocks in Basket, Field Bouquet, Flowers, Branch of Apple Tree, Lilac*. This was an enormous change: what Konchalovsky had regarded in his early period as a "thing complete in itself" he now portrayed as belonging to man, as the heritage of mankind.

The Summer Still Life, With Corn and Lemons, Two Tea Pots, Deli Cigarettes and, especially, the big canvas *Vegetables*—Konchalovsky's recent (1945-1946) paintings testify that the artist has retained his high skill and that after his three score and ten years he has lost neither acuity of vision nor freshness of feeling.

Landscape and portrait painting in Konchalovsky's art followed that of the still life and developed side by side with it. Man and nature, formal and analytically vivisected in the initial period of his artistic endeavour, became more harmonious between 1918 and 1922.

Gradually the artist mastered such important elements of realistic art as light, air, movement—all attainments of the impressionists that he had previously neglected.

Artists of the 20th century are undoubtedly indebted to the impressionists for the development and enrichment of the technique of painting and for new discoveries in colour and light. Impressionism was limited in its creative method: it developed some aspects of art to the detriment of others: light to the detriment of form, freshness to the detriment of colour precision and the study to the detriment of the composition. This dual nature of impressionism entered into Konchalovsky's paintings.

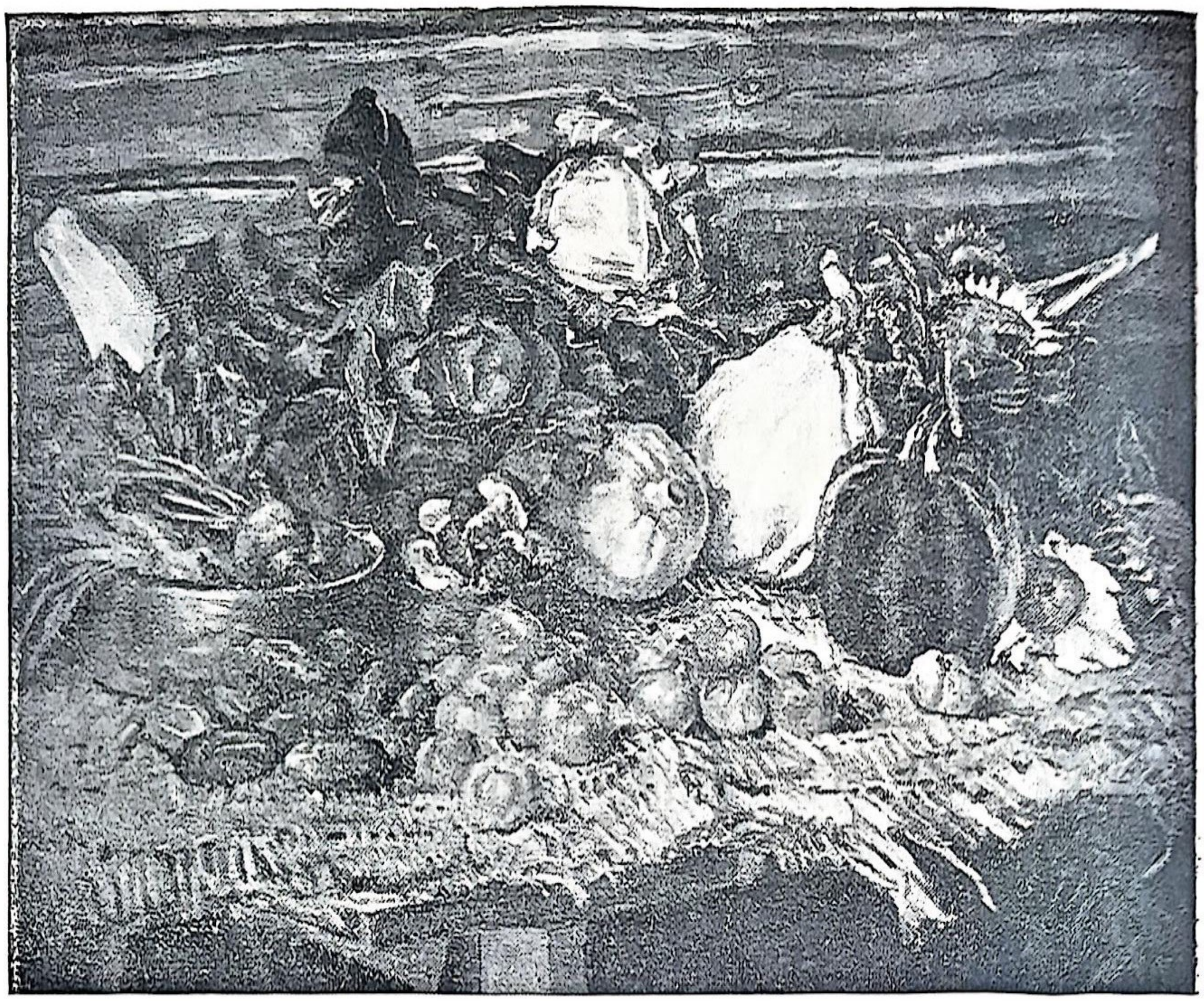
In Konchalovsky's Narva landscapes (1918) there appear for the first time contrasts between motionless and moving objects; the wind blows great rifts in the clouds, there are wind-blown trees and the quivering surface of a river. The ice was broken—the direct sensation broke up the static of the Cezannian form from within. All this, however, was only the beginning. Rejoicing over the freshness of his perception of nature, Konchalovsky, instead of subordinating his impressions to his aim was himself as yet an easy and willing slave of his own impressions.

By 1919, at Kuntsevo near Moscow, and, particularly in 1920 and 1921, at Abramtsevo—the favourite "patrimony" of Russian artists, Konchalovsky painted landscapes in which the will and intention of the artist were clearly manifested. He depicted the majestic oak grove, the mighty trunks and proud tops of trees with particular enthusiasm. "In my Abramtsevo oaks," says Konchalovsky, "my painting was naturally still bound by Cezannian methods to which I had grown accustomed and for which I feel a kinship. But my attitude to nature was different now, it was no longer Cezannian. I wanted to create a living landscape in which the trees do not merely stick out of the ground, as is frequently the case in modern painting, but which grow out of the ground so that you may actually feel their roots, like those of the old masters."

Konchalovsky's landscapes of the Abramtsevo period were an endeavour to get beyond the limited possibilities of impressionism.

Impressionism as a style and method was in principle as alien to Konchalovsky as naturalism. He was convinced that painting must not only depict the world, but transform it into an artistic image. Painting must therefore be conscious and active. "Painting," Konchalovsky contends, "like any other art, depends entirely on selection . . . A thing that is depicted too close to nature sometimes does not resemble nature at all. Surikov often said: 'What a number of details we must sacrifice.' You must not take all you see, for you must generalize and choose. Tolstoy was right when he said: 'Only that which runs with the grain is suitable for a work of art, and whatever runs against the grain is cast off.'" In this connection we must, of course, understand the word "grain" as the artistic conception which directs the entire process of selection.

The direct feeling for nature and active



Vegetables. *By P. Konchalovsky*

interpretation of the landscape, new to Konchalovsky, provided him with the problem of portraying man in nature. Turning to one of the traditional themes of the French school of the 19th-20th centuries, he repeated for years in different variants the subject of *Women Bathers* and *Bathers*—a useful medium for the study of the human body to which the artist had heretofore paid small attention.

In 1924 Konchalovsky returned from a trip to Italy with a series of landscapes—*Vesuvius*, *Tintoretto's Home*, *Olive Trees*, *Grotto of Nymph Egeria*, *St. Peter's Square*, *Silvester Shchedrin's Grave in Sorrento*—which, despite their profound sincerity, bore the imprint of the impressions of an alien.

Two summers in succession—in 1925 and 1926—Konchalovsky spent in Novgorod. Here he felt he was in his native milieu surrounded by familiar nature and genuinely Russian, in some respects patriarchal, life. It was here, that Konchalovsky took the subject matter for his best genre canvases—*Novgorodsy*, (Free Citizens of Novgorod), and *Return From the Fair*.

A master of the landscape and still life, since the beginning of the twenties, Konchalovsky has never abandoned the dream of genre painting. In 1923 he finished his *Harvest*, and *Gathering in the Grain*—paintings usually defined as *genre en plein air*. The artist, it seems, does not paint landscape without man, but he continues to give nature decisive preference.

In *Novgorodsy* Konchalovsky painted people with enormous enthusiasm. In this work he was inspired by the magnificent church frescoes which amazed him by their vitality. A seemingly chance genre scene in an old Russian inn becomes in Konchalovsky's interpretation a painting of epic scope.

A year later, in 1926, the artist finished another genre canvas—*Return From the Fair*—which is even more remarkable by its epic grandeur, monumental images and skillful execution.

But subject compositions still occupied a relatively modest place in Konchalovsky's paintings.

An interest in the past from time to time flared up in Konchalovsky's work, but he was not drawn to the dramatic national events, as was the case with Surikov. He was attracted by the monuments of Russian history preserved to our day—such as *Oleg's House* in Riazan, *Basil the Blessed* in Moscow, *House of Peter the First*, *Cavaliers' Wash Room* at Detskoye Selo, etc. A feeling for historical landscapes and an ability to revive images of the past in their natural surroundings are inherent in Konchalovsky.

Konchalovsky's best landscapes are marked with the same national traits. Winter grain threshing on a collective farm, tops of birches, springtime, autumn, a river bank—all this is traditional, but at the same time the artist sees it with a new eye. Konchalovsky is especially fond of painting trees—their trunks, branches and leaves appearing in silhouette against the background of the sky. He is equally carried away by the luxuriant wealth of succulent verdure and the placidity of cold snow blankets.

Konchalovsky's art is active and energetic, it is manifested by a strong realistic grasp, permeated by a joyful lyricism devoid of any melancholy.

The next milestone on Konchalovsky's road to realism—following still life and landscape—was the portrait, a genre particularly difficult for a painter who was in such close contact with the latest non-realist trends of West-European art which had lost the ability to express the inner spiritual world of man.

In his early period Konchalovsky probably didn't feel the difference between the problems of portrait painting and still life. But the many portraits he has painted in the past twenty years give him the right to deny "that in painting man may be treated like a bottle. And it surprises me," says Konchalovsky, "to hear my portraits being accused of 'still lifeism.' They may be imperfectly painted, they may even be bad, but this is not so because I still treat man as an inanimate piece of nature." This assertion of Konchalovsky's is absolutely correct, since from the beginning of the twenties the realistic representation of man has become the ruling principle in his work.

Rapid reaction and execution are peculiar to Konchalovsky's temperament as a painter. In some portraits that required a prolonged and profound study of nature, Konchalovsky unwittingly laid stress on superficial decorative approach. Perhaps he was aware of this, and for a long time preferred to paint portraits of his closest associates.

Until recently Konchalovsky had painted very few psychological portraits. One of these, the *Portrait of My Daughter* was painted in 1924. The inspired portrait of People's Artist E. O. Stepanova appeared only ten years later. In many of his other portraits the abstract treatment of the subject and concern with plastic and colour problems cut the painter off from the inner world of man. "If I were accused," Konchalovsky himself stated not so long ago, "of a lack of psychologism, of Serovian treatment of the characteristic and the individual, the accusation would be correct, and I would have to accept it!"

At the same time, *Portrait of O. V. Konchalovskaya With Beads* and *Portrait of Natasha in Pink*, painted in 1925 already show Konchalovsky as a master of the realistic portrait. The artist portrays not the human being in general but a concrete human personality.

In the *Portrait of Natasha* he depicts along with the typical traits those of the individual. The painting represents a strong young girl who is bending over to tie a lace on her shoe. Her head is turned to the spectator. There is a smile on her lips and in her eyes, and her expression is frank and kind.

The Portrait of Natasha in Pink—one of Konchalovsky's best genre portraits is continued in *First Steps*, *Sleeping Katenka*, *Katenka With Cereal*, etc.

The results attained by Konchalovsky in this field during the thirties and forties are as excellent as his work on the landscape and still life. During this period portraits came from the artist's studio in series: there was the children's cycle—*What Am I to Do With You? Andron Mikhalkov*, *Roma Ivanov*, portraits of Spanish Republicans, portraits of writers—K. Trenyov, V. Ivanov, A. Tolstoy, A. Fadeyev, and S. Mikhalkov, of musicians—K. Zekki, V. Sofronitsky, S. Prokofiev, and, finally, a big series of portraits of Heroes of the Soviet Union on which Konchalovsky worked during the war.

Konchalovsky's latest portraits present contemporaries who are firmly rooted in the new ways of life, and who form, as it were, an integral part of it. At the same time they are human personalities with individual features of face and character.

It would be absurd to reproach Konchalovsky for the predominance of the genre portrait over the psychological portrait if this is in the nature of the artist's work. In the portrait, like in any complex painting, there can be posed and solved in various ways the most diverse problems.

In 1943-1946 Konchalovsky returned to a direct psychological interpretation of the sitter in such excellent portraits as those of A. Tolstoy, A. Kemenova, the Iranian Princess Ashraf Pehlevi, of S. Trainitsky and A. Gaidamovich, and the new self-portrait purchased by the Tretyakov Gallery.

Large compositional portraits of Pushkin and Lermontov occupy a particular place in Konchalovsky's art. These works have expanded beyond the ordinary field of the portrait genre and are, strictly speaking, historical paintings. At the same time the artist's aim is to reveal the psychology of his characters.

The portrait of Pushkin, the fruit of more than eight years of work, evoked heated disputes on its appearance. People were justly puzzled by the needlessly intimate character of the representation of the great poet, and Konchalovsky himself, striving to eliminate the contradiction between the lofty conception and prosaic interpretation, repeatedly repainted many details of the portrait. It was shown in its last variant at Konchalovsky's exhibition in 1941. Freed from naturalistic detail, the image of Pushkin gained considerably in historical and artistic truth. Konchalovsky was particularly successful with his inspired portrayal of the poet's head—the finest portrait since those of Tropinin and Kiprensky who painted Pushkin from life.

In *Lermontov*, which was done during the war, Konchalovsky continued his work on historical portraits. Lermontov's head, dominating in the painting, is distinguished for its great psychological expressiveness.

The portraits of Pushkin and Lermontov, like any historical canvases painted not from nature are, of course, not typical of Konchalovsky's art. His entire work is firmly bound up with *visible* reality, with nature. Konchalovsky willingly and confidently portrays life in its individual manifestations.

An exception to this is the *Bathing of the Red Cavalry*, a major work, which as early as 1928 opened to Konchalovsky the road

to synthetic images and monumental forms. It was difficult until recently to form a correct judgement of this canvas because at exhibitions it was viewed at close range. At the exhibition of Konchalovsky's works, when the *Bathing of the Red Cavalry* was placed high up on the wall, it could be viewed for the first time as a bold and convincing mural. The athletic figures of the soldiers who with their horses nearly fill the entire canvas, the calm and at the same time powerful rhythm of the composition, the energetic movement and the sculptured modelling—all make up a broadly conceived, heroic piece of painting.

Working on this mural, Konchalovsky spent a long time in cavalry barracks, searched long and diligently for his models and studied copies of Parthenon friezes at the Museum of Fine Arts.

The Bathing of the Red Cavalry as an experiment in monumental painting has had no sequel in Konchalovsky's work. He was again carried away by living, direct impressions which offer inexhaustible material for his art. Every now and then the painter broke away from the easel to work on a theatrical design, each time displaying his talent as a decorator.

Konchalovsky had come into contact with the theatre back in his childhood when he painted the decorations for amateur theatricals. As a student of the Academy of Arts he painted the scenery for *Phryna in Eleusis*, a tableau vivant, and received a prize for the decorations for a student ball. Konchalovsky's first professional work was produced in 1905 when he painted the curtain and scenery for the operas *Muguette* and *Hurricane*—for the "Aquarium" Theatre.

Soon afterwards, following his bent for decorative painting, Konchalovsky accepted an order for a plafond for a merchant's living room, imitating the style of the 18th century decorators. In 1911 he painted the scenery for the opera *Merchant Kalashnikov* for Zimin's Theatre.

Konchalovsky's subsequent scenic works were done at very long intervals, approximately ten years apart. In 1922 he painted the scenery for *Pericolla* at the Nemirovich-Danchenko Theatre, in 1932—for *The Mistress of the Inn* at the Art Theatre, and for *Four Despots* at the Experimental Theatre, while in 1945 he painted the scenery and did the costume sketches for *Carmen* at the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre.

In his work for the theatre, as in his painting, Konchalovsky fights against routine and seeks new means of expression. And if in the beginning he refused to reconcile himself to naturalism, later he was to fight another fashionable extreme—theatrical constructivism. "It has long been my desire to bring back to the stage real painting which was driven out in favour of the already humdrum and old-fashioned constructions," said Konchalovsky when working on *The Mistress of the Inn* and *Four Despots*. "I should like to paint simple scenery, spare in detail, but at the same time answering to the requirements of the theatre."

Konchalovsky belongs to the older generation of Soviet artists; his best works are now on display at the exhibition dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of his work in art. The artist does not intend to "rest on his laurels." His folio of creative plans, which he jokingly calls "unrealized dreams" is far from depleted. And Konchalovsky is not jesting when he says that the time for real work has only now come. He continues to paint a great deal, and neither his advanced years nor his mature skill prevent his art from being younger today than ever before.

MARK NEUMAN

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NEWS AND VIEWS

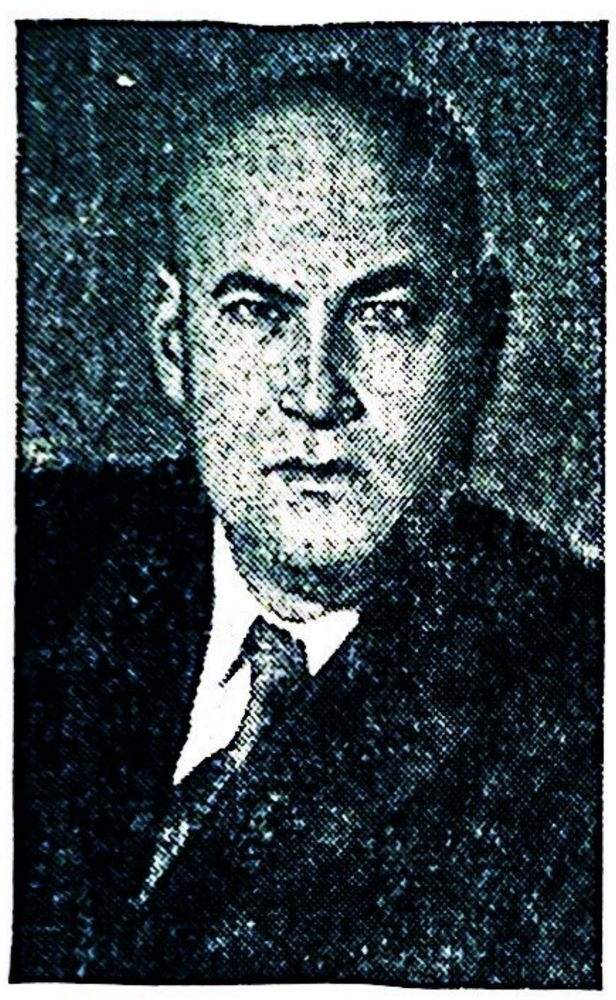
THE PEOPLE'S ELECT

Elections to the Supreme Soviets of the Union and Autonomous Republics of the U.S.S.R. were held in February. Close ties existing between Soviet writers and their people were manifested by the fact that many writers and poets, prominent in Soviet letters, are among the new deputies.

Brief biographical sketches of some of our writer-deputies follow.

BORIS GORBATOV

When Boris Gorbatov was fourteen his first story appeared in the Donbas newspaper *The All-Union Coal-Scuttle*. Today, at thirty-eight, his work has been appearing in print for a quarter of a century. He has been on the staff of *Pravda* since 1931. As a newspaperman, Gorbatov has had ample opportunity to observe the most vital aspects of life in his country. His travel notes give a vivid picture of the new geography of the U.S.S.R. In the East, journeying via Kamchatka, he reached the Komandorskie Islands. In the North, from Dixon Island, he flew the round of the wintering stations; in the West he fought at Chernovitsi, retreated with his units through the Donbas to Tuapse, then advancing once more to Chernovitsi, he started on the forward march, that ended at Berlin. As a youth Gorbatov saw his story *Yacheika* (The Nucleus) go through ten editions in a short time and translated into foreign languages. This was his first story about the young man of his own time who was later to figure as the hero of all his books.



The Ordinary Arctic, which appeared in 1940, was the result of a winter which Gorbatov spent on Dixon Island. His *Law of the Wintering Party*, a play recently completed, is about the people of those same parts.

During the war years Gorbatov's books followed one another in rapid succession: *Letters to a Comrade*; *Tales of the Soldier's Soul*; *Alexei Kulikov, Private*; a play, *When the Fathers Were Young*, and *It Happened in the Donbas*, a film scenario.

Unconquered, a book which won Gorbatov the Stalin Prize (he is also the author of the scenario for the film), is a story of the locality where he was born and the people among whom he grew up. His father worked at the Petromaryino mine. The book's hero, "old Taras" is the foreman of the works where Gorbatov had his first job as a boy. From his childhood years he had known the dignity, the straightforwardness and strength of character of simple Soviet people. Now he could write with penetrating and convincing truth how staunchly these men and women stood up to the fascists.

Unconquered is read throughout Russia; and always with pride and emotion. Today the "unconquered" people of the partisan land in the Bryansk forests have elected the author, Boris Gorbatov their deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federated Republic.

Boris Gorbatov has been awarded nine government decorations for his contribution to Soviet letters and his valour in action.

MIKHAIL ISAKOVSKY

Isakovsky was born at the turn of the century, in 1900, in a poor peasant family near Smolensk. Poverty and hardship were permanent spectres in the crowded cottage, where there was a family of thirteen children.

His father was the village postman and Mikhail used newspapers and magazines that came his way to teach himself to read and write. When later he went to school there were more difficulties: he had no warm clothing and his eyes were weak. The teachers, however, soon realized that the little boy in spectacles was a pupil above the average. He finally overcame his shyness and read two of his own poems at the graduation exercises.

It is difficult to say what life would have had in store for the poet had it not been for the October Revolution. So many talented boys in tsarist Russia were doomed to end their life in poverty, obscure and unknown! But Isakovsky was more fortunate: the Revolution determined his fate. The year 1918 saw him working on the local newspaper. Recalling his introduction into journalism, he says smilingly: "I worked for two years on that paper, and I worked literally alone. The whole thing from the first line to the last

had to be written by hand before going into print, and I had to read the proofs, set the type, and, as often as not, turn the press."

In 1927, Isakovsky's first volume of verse, *Wires in the Straw*, appeared. The poet had closely observed the changes taking place in the Soviet village, and his lines, simple and devoid of affectation, were fresh and new. He was writing of things that no one had put into verse before. Maxim Gorky, who was living abroad at the time, wrote favourably of the budding poet's book in an article he sent to *Izvestia*.

This volume was followed by others: *In the Backwoods*, *Masters of the Land*, *Four Wishes*, *Verses and Songs*. Isakovsky is essentially a writer of songs. They are sung in all the remote corners of the land, and often by people who do not even know the name of the author. His talent springs from the people. His songs are filled with life and truth, lofty simplicity, and deep feeling. They were sung at the front during the Great Patriotic War. Many of our composers have set his verses to music, but it is with the Pyatnitsky State Russian Chorus that Isakovsky's collaboration is closest. Vladimir Zakharov, the composer who writes for the chorus, puts Isakovsky's lyrics to melodies drawn from the treasure house of the Russian folk song.

Isakovsky, the bard of the people, has been elected by the people as their representative to the Supreme Soviet.

VALENTIN KATAYEV

"What strikes one most when looking through the list of Katayev's works," says Vera Inber, the poetess, "is his capacity for hard work, that precious gift, lacking which even the greatest talent runs the risk of going to waste."

Hardly a year passes that Katayev does not produce a new book. He is a master of different genres: humorous sketches, short stories, large literary canvases, novels and tales, scenarios for the cinema. He is one of the favourite authors of Soviet youth. The ingenuous, life-like image in *A Lonely Sail Looms White*, of the little Odessa fisher boy, Gavrik, who plays his own part in the 1905 Revolution in his native town, is one of the most vivid and moving figures in children's literature in the Soviet Union.

Vanya Solntsev, the hero of Katayev's wartime novel *A Son of the Regiment*, has now stepped out of the pages of the book onto the stage and the cinema screen.

VASSILI LEBEDEV-KUMACH

Here is the text of a letter, signed: "Senior Sergeant Kolsman, Order Bearer," which was received by the editor of one of our papers during the war:

"Dear Comrade Editor,

I would very much appreciate it if you would tell the poet, Lebedev-Kumach, that I always had his *Song About My Country* on my lips when I was going over the top. Singing it, I never knew what fear was."

That letter from the front is an indication of how popular Lebedev-Kumach's verses and poems are among the people. His first verses appeared in print on the eve of the Revolution, in 1916. The twenties saw him on the staff of two humorous papers—*Krokodil* and *Lapot*. Lebedev-Kumach is in his element in the mass song. In 1934, the whole country was singing his *March of the Jolly Fellows*, written for the film *Jolly Fellows*. His *Sacred War* was sung up and down the country from the first days of the war. His verses were printed in *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, and in army and navy papers; they have also been published in book form.

Lebedev-Kumach, active figure in public affairs, was deputy to the First Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation. Now, once again, he has been elected deputy.

MIKOLA BAZHAN

Mikola Bazhan's interests have never been restricted to events and developments in his native Ukraine—they were far afield, encompassing all that was new and outstanding in the life of the multi-national Soviet Union.

Up and down the country—in Moscow, Leningrad or Minsk; in the mountains of Georgia and the plains of Armenia; in the vast expanses of Uzbekistan — wherever there was constructive labour, this singer of the people was to be met. The friendship of the peoples is one of the central themes in his writings. He translated into

the Ukrainian *The Knight in the Tiger Skin* by the great Georgian poet Shota Rust'veli and is the author of a poem about Sergei Kirov.

During the war, Mikola Bazhan edited a military paper, wrote verses and pamphlets and helped the Ukrainian partisans. Of his poetry of that period his tragic *Stalingrad Notebook*, a work which won him a Stalin Prize, is perhaps the most widely read. A delicate lyricist, Bazhan has shown himself no less skillful in epic narration, to wit his historic poem *Danilo Galitsky*, centring round the national hero, who, in the year 1235 routed the German knights in Volyn.

Of recent years Mikola Bazhan, the litterateur, has come to the fore as a political figure. In London he delivered a speech before the General Assembly of the United Nations on behalf of the Ukraine. He holds the post of Vice-President of the Council of Ministers of the Ukraine. And now, he has been elected deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian Republic.

VILLIS LACIS

There is hardly a man or woman in Latvia who does not know the novels *Son of a Fisherman*, or the *Storm*, or the children's story *Forgers of the Future*. The heroes of these books are near and dear to Latvian readers.

Lacis was born on the eve of the Russian Revolution of 1905, in the family of a longshoreman in a fishing village. During World War I, when the Germans invaded Latvia, the Lacis family evacuated deep inland into Russia. The young Lacis took on a job as errand boy, first in a publishing office and later in the village Soviet. In 1921, the family returned to Latvia. As time passed Villis turned his hand to many trades—longshoreman, fisherman, stoker on board a steamer that sailed nearly every sea in the world. At night when the hard day's work was done, he read and studied and wrote.

In the thirties, Lacis' contributions began to appear in *Doumy*, a progressive democratic magazine whose editor was Andrei Upits. One after the other novels from his pen appeared in print: *On all the Seas*, *Wingless Birds*, *Five-Storied Town*. The pages of his novel *Son of a Fisherman* are permeated with the austere romanticism of labour and struggle. In bourgeois Latvia the works of progressive writers were banned by the censorship and the books of men like Lacis, Rainis and Upits were read secretly.

When the Latvian people threw off the yoke of the exploiters, Villis Lacis was placed at the head of the people's government and subsequently became President of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian Republic. During the war Lacis took an active part in organizing the partisan movement in Latvia and Belorussia. The liberation of his country from the Hitlerites, again saw him leading public affairs, directing the reconstruction of the national economy and culture, and the rehabilitation of towns and villages burnt by the fascists.

A writer of talent and an outstanding statesman—that in brief is Villis Lacis, Deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian Republic.

OMAR SHIPIN

In the remotest corners of Kazakhstan people know and love the songs of Omar Shipin. Riding horseback, dombra in hand, he has traversed miles upon miles across the boundless expanses of the steppes. Many are the people he has seen, and the sights and events, and many the songs he has composed on his travels.

In the year 1916, the people of the Turgaisk steppe rose up against the tsarist officials and Kazakh feudals. The national liberation movement was headed by the popular hero, Amangeldy Imanov, who finally joined the Communist Party. Fighting in his detachments was the young poet and soldier, Omar Shipin. His songs of the Civil War were passed from mouth to mouth, and the name of the folk singer came to acquire wide popularity.

The war was over. On the one-time battlefields golden feather grasses waved in the breeze. Omar now sang of the labour of man. The singer had enemies; the words of truth spoken by the people's bard were as a thorn in their flesh. And one night in the steppe, an ambush was laid to trap Omar. But his faithful fleet-footed horse saved his master.

Omar Shipin, the child of nature, yearned for knowledge. He learned to read and write. He could now put his improvisations to paper. Shortly before the war his epic poem about Amangeldy Imanov, the hero of the Kazakh people, appeared in print.

Other men prominent in Soviet literature who have been elected deputies to the Supreme Soviets of the various republics include the following:

The deputy for Vladimir Region is the poet, Alexander Tvardovsky, author of the poem *Vassili Terkin*.

Kursk Region has elected the poet, Alexei Surkov, whose songs and verses made him famous in the war years.

Avetik Isaakian, the venerable bard of Armenia, is the deputy of his people. The Ukrainian poet, Pavlo Tychina, has been elected deputy for the second time. The poet, Yakub Kolas, is deputy for Belorussia. The people of mountainous Daghestan have elected as their deputies Gamzat Tsadas and Abdul Vagif Suleimanov, both popular poets.

Among the writers representing Lithuania in the Supreme Soviet are Justas Paleckis and Pietras Zvirka.

The people of the Mordovian Republic cast their votes for Fekla Bezzubova, the peasant narrator of folk tales.

Alexander Korneichuk, the playwright, has been elected deputy for the second time, to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian Republic.

Two of the deputies for Georgia are Simon Chikovani, head of the Georgian Writers' Union, and the poet Ilya Mossashvilli.

LITERATURE

NEW SECTION OF THE MOSCOW WRITERS' CLUB

The Union of Soviet Writers has a membership of three hundred and thirteen prose writers. For many years the prose writers were organized in different sections, according to literary genres: scientific belles-lettres; the historical novel; scientific fantasy; the short story and others, each of them having its own traditions and experience.

In opening the first meeting of a new section for prose writers in general, Constantine Fedin, the novelist, declared:

"We feel a real need of a united department for prose writers to include those working on large canvases, that is, long novels and tales."

This organization will unite the older litterateurs and the young writers recently accepted into the Union. There will be talks and discussions on theoretical aspects of literature and meetings devoted to problems of belles-lettres. New books of Moscow writers, both those already published and those that have not yet appeared in print, are to be considered. The members will have an opportunity of voicing their views on the merits or shortcomings of these works.

"We hope to draw literary critics and scholars into the work of our section," Fedin said, "The discussions held there will be taken into account in the drafting of publication plans and in the work of the editorial boards of our literary magazines."

Alexander Fadeyev, General Secretary of the Writers' Union, appealed to writers who join the new section to work for a further improvement of the artistic and ideological standards of Soviet books. Every writer, he said, is responsible to the whole people for what he has written.

"The writer," Fadeyev added, "must be as honest and impartial as Marat when it comes to giving a fair estimation of literary and ideological merits—only then will the new section be authoritative and its work fruitful."

The speaker went on to mention the successful work of the other sections of the Writers' Club—poets, playwrights and scenario writers. He remarked on their rising prestige and their active and close ties with the theatre, cinema and allied arts.

Others who spoke at the inaugural meeting were the writers Leonid Sobolev, Constantine Paustovsky, Vadim Kozhevnikov, and Alexander Tikhonov, who gave their views and suggested lines and forms of work for the new section.

A ONE POEM EVENING

Poet's evenings have long become tradition with the Moscow Writers' Club, but there was something distinctly novel about one such gathering recently. Thirty-three poets took part in the program and each read one of his poems. The hall was crowded with an audience of writers, journalists and students. The evening opened with a drawing of lots, each poet reciting, in the order indicated by the number drawn, one of his own verses, not exceeding thirty-five to forty lines.

Different generations were represented—side by side with "veterans" like Nikolai Aseyev, Pavel Antokolsky, Vladimir Lugovskoy, Dmitri Petrovsky and Dmitri Tsenzor, there were young poets like Mikhail Lukonin, Vladimir Urin, Semyon Gudzenko and Ivan Baukov. The audience showed high appreciation of the verses of Sergei Mikhalkov, Evgeni Dalmatovsky and Mikhail Svetlov. It was Semyon Kirsanov who initiated the "one-poem evening." Among those who read their verses were the poetesses Agnia Barto, Zinaida Shishova and Veronika Tushnova. The evening was highly successful and was repeated as a public performance at the Hall of the Polytechnical Museum.

MOSCOW'S EIGHT HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY

"Moscow past, present and future," was described at a large gathering at the Moscow Writers' Club, devoted to the coming eight hundredth anniversary of the foundation of Moscow. An exhibition arranged by the club contained books, engravings and pictures dealing with old Moscow. Among the rare items were guide books, dated 1771 and 1824, and a publication entitled *Journal for Pedestrians Walking from Moscow to Rostov, and Back to Moscow*, printed in 1830.

People of the Slums, one of the books on display, is from the pen of the journalist Vladimir Gilyarovsky, published in 1887, and describes the horrors of the old Moscow slums. By order of the tsarist government the book was confiscated and burnt as "pernicious". Of the two copies that survived the auto-da-fé, one is in the possession of the author.

The audience heard an interesting account of the excavation done in the city during the last twenty years. Archeological finds established the fact that in the Bronze Age there were tribes of cattle breeders living on the territory of what is now Moscow and its environs.

The architect, Nikolai Vinogradov, spoke of the history of the Moscow Kremlin. The present restoration work is reviving the invaluable monuments of ancient Russian art of building.

Pyotr Sytin, a connoisseur of Moscow's past, told his listeners, that the house where they were sitting, now the property of the Writers' Club, is immortalized in the pages of Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* as the home of the Rostov family.

A very warm welcome was accorded to Nikolai Teleshev, one of the oldest Russian writers. Contemporary and friend of Chekhov and Gorky, he told of many notable literary events in the life of Moscow, he described the inauguration of the Pushkin monument, and some of the Moscow newspapers of a day long past.

Academician Alexei Shchusev, the architect, spoke of the future of Moscow in the terms of the five-year plan which provides for the building of new thoroughfares, the improvement of Moscow's outskirts and the construction of new river embankments.

THE WRITERS OF DAGHESTAN

The wholehearted labour of the Soviet people, their hard work for the realization of the new Stalin Five-Year Plan, is a favourite theme with the writers of Daghestan.

The poet Abdul Vagif Suleimanov is completing a tale he has called *The Sleepless Nights of Temir Bultanov.* The hero is the chairman of a collective farm who, on returning from the war, works vigorously and devotedly for the well-being of the farm entrusted to his charge.

The poet, Anvar Adzhiev is working on a lyrical poem *Oragbei*, about a native of Daghestan who took part in the storming of Berlin. In his native village they had long given him up for dead. There are some moving lines telling of Oragbei's meeting with his mother and friends.

Ali Kaziev, the folk bard, has dedicated his latest verses to the men who extract "liquid gold" from the entrails of the earth—to the oil workers of Daghestan.

MUSIC

DEVELOPMENT OF THE VIOLIN CONCERTO, A CONCERT CYCLE BY DAVID OISTRAKH

The current musical season in Moscow features a concert cycle, called *Development of the Violin Concerto*, given by the prominent Soviet violinist, Professor David Oistrakh.

The development of the Concerto for violin and orchestra—the leading genre in violin music—is closely bound up with the names of prominent West-European and Russian composers and performers. There were two main lines in the evolution of the violin concerto; first the virtuoso style demanding pre-eminently technical mastery of performance, and secondly, the genre distinguished by depth of content of the violin music. The first style may be said to be associated with the names of Paganini and Vieuxtemps, the second is represented by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Chaikovsky.

In his recitals David Oistrakh played the violin concertos by composers of the latter group. His five programs included fifteen concertos by West-European as well as Russian and Soviet composers, arranged in historical sequence.

There were concertos by Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, Mendelsohn, Edward Elgar, William Walton and Sibellius; Chausson's *Poem* for violin and orchestra; *Concert Suite* by Taneyev, Concertos by Glazunov and Chaikovsky, and by the Soviet composers Myaskovsky, Prokofiev and Khachaturian.

These concerts held at the Large Hall of the Moscow State Conservatory are proving most successful. The symphony orchestra is directed by Vassili Nebolsin and Kirill Kondrashin.

This new concert cycle is evidence of the versatility of Oistrakh's gifts and the growth of his mastery as performer.

NEW GEORGIAN OPERA

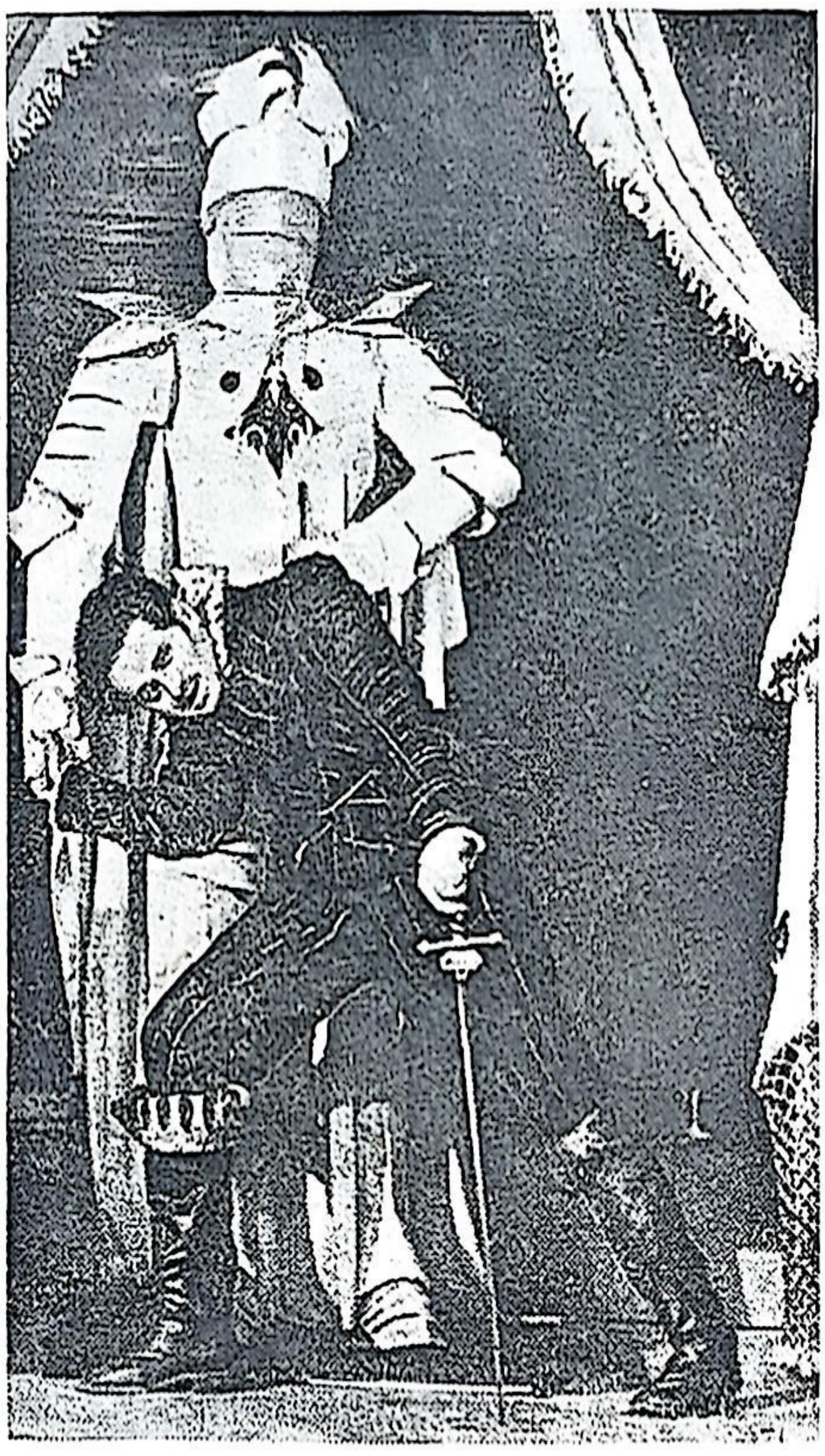
Bashi-Achuki is the name of a new opera by the young Georgian composer, A. Kereselidze, staged by the Tbilisi Opera House.

The story of the opera follows a tale of the same name by the Georgian classic writer, Akaki Tsereteli, who described the struggle waged by the Georgian people against their Persian oppressors in the 17th century. The hero of the opera is Berutcha, one of the leaders of the rebellion, a fearless horseman whom Persians named "Bashi-Achuki"—the man without a hat. (The Imeritians—a Georgian tribe—at that time wore a flat headdress made of cloth.) He loves the beautiful Lerzamissa, who helps Berutcha to set free his sisters, who were to be sent to the Shah of Persia. All four flee to Kakhetia, where they join the rebels. At a festival held by one of the Shah's satraps, Berutcha challenges a Persian warrior, Abdushail, to a wrestling bout, and conquers him. Taking advantage of the general confusion he thrusts his sword into the heart of a Georgian prince who has betrayed his country. The Persian troops set fire to an ancient monastery where the rebels have taken refuge. But nothing can stop the people's wrath which has spread throughout Georgia. The Shah's satrap falls by the hand of Bashi-Achuki, the people's hero.

The best episodes in the opera are written around Georgian folk melodies, the choruses being arranged in the style of the Georgian folk song.

SONGS OF THE RUSSIAN VILLAGE

It has always been the aim of the State Russian Folk Chorus to show the Russian song as inherently bound up with the life of the people. The tradition is being carried on in the ensemble's latest program—a series of lyrical scenes, called *Beyond the Village.* The text of these sketches of life in the pre-revolutionary village is by Pyotr Kazmin, a connoisseur of Russian folklore, both in poetry and music. The subject is a simple, moving story of love, friendship and loyalty, the text is fresh and colourful abounding in popular turns of speech. Spontaneously interwoven in the web of the lyrical narra-



Scene from the opera Don Juan, *staged by the Chaikovsky Opera Studio*

tive, the folk songs contribute to form a harmonious pattern.

Beyond the Village is produced by the actor Dmitri Orlov.

MOZART ON THE OPERA STAGE

Mozart's *Don Juan* is being performed at the Chaikovsky Opera Studio of the Moscow Conservatory.

Mozart's vocal music demands of the singer a noble simplicity, precision of phrasing, and complete absence of any affectation. These features are brought out by the young singer Ivan Shmelyov who sings the part of Don Juan. Galina Popova, as the coquettish peasant maiden (Zerlina) possesses an undoubtedly fine voice. The ensembles are exceptionally good and the conductor, Nikolai Anosov, has trained his orchestra well.

THEATRE

FOR THOSE AT SEA

(A play by Boris Lavrenyov, staged by the Maly and Lenin Komsomol theatres in Moscow).

Premières of Boris Lavrenyov's play *For Those at Sea* (Stalin Prize Winner for 1946) were given simultaneously in two Moscow theatres.

What is the real meaning of military fame, and how should it be attained? That is the theme running through *For Those at Sea*. The central figures, Borovsky and Maximov, naval officers, hold similar positions. Borovsky is entirely taken up with his own career and thinks that all is fair in the struggle for fame and promotion. "Fortune is fickle!" he says, "You must chase it boldly, stubbornly, yield it up to nobody, seize it by its glittering wings without shedding their rainbow tints. . ." Maximov is of a different calibre, he believes that the interests of his country and the military successes of the people come first. "Do your duty!" he says to Borovsky. "The future will show who's a hero, and who's not—who's a falcon and who's a hen. . . ."

As a result of events unfolded in the pattern of an intricate plot, Borovsky is charged with a grave offence. He wants for himself all the glory of a battle successfully fought and gives Maximov an erroneous coordination calculated to make him arrive on the spot too late to take part in the engagement. Borovsky not only fails to get the better of the enemy, but causes big Soviet casualties. Sentence of death is passed and commuted. Borovsky is given a chance to rehabilitate his honour and his name.

Besides the two main personages the characters include a whole group of other officers of the Soviet Navy. The division commander—experienced and wise; a newspaper editor whom the war has made a resourceful and experienced commander of a cutter; the young woman doctor, Borovsky's wife,

Scene from the play For Those at Sea, *staged by the Lenin. Komsomol Theatre* (*Act III*)

who enters heart and soul into her new role of naval officer, and an actress who has given up the stage to do her bit in the thick of the fighting.

In the Lenin Komsomol Theatre the producer of the play is Ivan Bersenev, and the sets were designed by Tatlin. The opening scene on the pier affords a remarkable feeling of the sea—of boundless expanses and raging elements. The actors are for the most part young people whom Moscow audiences meet for almost the first time. Borovsky is played by Karnovich-Valois; his wife, by Fadeyeva; Maksimov, by Petrachenko.

On the stage of the Maly Theatre we see the masters of that old playhouse taking part in a successful performance. Directed by producer Constantine Zubov, the play is beautifully staged by the artist Pimenov.

The role of the division-commander is impersonated by Mikhail Zharov, the celebrated actor, also known for his screen performances. Mikhail Tsarev is Borovsky, Nikolai Annenkov—Maximov. Dina Zerkalova plays the part of Borovsky's wife, and Elena Gogoleva plays Gorelova, the actress.

Both producer and actors in the Maly Theatre production have contributed to a first-rate performance that reaches great emotional heights.

THE TEST OF TIME

There are plays in the repertoire of the Soviet theatre that have passed the test of time with flying colours, losing none of their freshness with the years. Among them we have Victor Gusev's *Glory* and *Platon Krechet* by Alexander Korneichuk, both of which have recently been revived on the stages of Moscow theatres.

The central figure of Leonid Rakhmanov's *The Deputy* is Professor Polezhayev, an old Russian scientist. The action of the play takes place in the years between 1916 and 1918. The prototype of this role was K. A. Timiryazev, the Russian scientist and revolutionary, and Professor Polezhayev is given traits that are common to progressive Russian scientists. The cinema actor, Nikolai Cherkasov gave a splendid portrayal of the role in film version called *Deputy of the Baltic*. Probably the finest stage interpretations of Professor Polezhayev have been given by Alexander Kramov and Evsei Lyubimov-Lanskoy.

The Moscow Dramatic Theatre—a young company, founded since the war, is producing Rakhmanov's play, and the central role is played by Nikolai Chistyakov. From the moment Polezhayev appears, the spectator succumbs to the spell of the energetic, sharp-witted and cheerful old professor. How unquenchable his vigour, how young his spirit, what freshness of feeling! His voice calling on his fellow-scholars to work with the young Soviet Republic, in the service of the people, rings out through the land. His courage costs him dearly. Friends turn away, he is boycotted by the reactionary strata of the students. We see before us the scientist and fighter breaking away from the old world, challenging routine and political bigotry.

The old professor is elected deputy by the sailors of the Baltic Fleet. The play, centring round the man who was the people's representative in the first years of the Revolution is of particular interest in our day when we see the names of so many prominent Soviet scientists figuring in the lists of deputies.

After an interval of several years the play called *A Lad From Our Town* has been revived at the Lenin Komsomol Theatre in Moscow.

The play has an interesting history. One day, not long before the war, the young poet Constantine Simonov asked to see Ivan Bersenev, the art manager of the theatre; he had brought a short synopsis of a play—four typewritten pages. The theatre thought well of the work and the four pages grew into a play which described the development of a personality, the heroic path of a young man of the Soviet epoch. The typical features of a Soviet man find their embodiment in Sergei Lukonin, the hero of the piece.

Simonov's play was successful throughout the U.S.S.R. The 1947 revival marked its 200th performance on the stage of the Lenin Komsomol Theatre.

GIFTS FROM YUGOSLAV AUDIENCES

The Lenin Komsomol Theatre which is back in Moscow after a tour in Yugoslavia, is sponsoring an exhibition of gifts the company received from Yugoslav audiences.

. . . There are national costumes in vivid colours: Montenegrin, Serbian, Macedonian, Croatian, Bosnian and Dalmatian, skillfully embroidered in silks, coloured wools, sequins, brocade. The gifts on display include a model of an ancient brigantine, presented to the theatre at Dubrovniki; there are kitchen vessels of beaten copper with national ornamentation by the craftsmen of Bosnia; a desk set and tea service worked by Sarajevo craftsmen. In Bosnia and Herzegovina the actors received sabres ornamented with silver and ivory.

One hundred and thirty clippings from Yugoslav papers and magazines represent notices and critical reviews on the theatre, its productions and actors. There are the bas-reliefs and busts of Marshal Tito on display.

Laurel and bronze wreaths intertwined with ribbons inscribed with words of gratitude and praise testify to the successes with the peoples of Yugoslavia achieved by these representatives of Soviet theatrical art.

TEN THOUSAND PERFORMANCES

Moscow has a theatre where the actors are made of wood, of japanned lacquer work of velvet or wool. The stage is a tiny one but large enough for genuine art. This is the Central Puppet Theatre, directed by Sergei Obrastsov.

. For many years the puppet theatre travelled from place to place. The triumphal entry of the brightly-coloured automobile-van into the court yards of large apartment houses was invariably hailed with delight by Moscow youngsters. One side of the van was thrown back, revealing the velvet wings. Now it was Petrushka, the Russian Punch,

hunchbacked, shrill-voiced, in his red cap, now Puss in Boots with a fluffy tail and a green cloak. The puppet theatre carried its performers to over a hundred and eighty towns. They journeyed far to the North, they toured the Volga valley, they played in the Far East and the Urals; in Middle Asia, the Crimea and the Caucasus.

In the war years the puppets made friends with front-line audiences and the workers of munitions factories. Not long ago the puppet theatre on Mayakovsky Square, Moscow, staged Obrastsov's ten-thousandth performance of the theatre. On that occasion they showed one of their best productions—*Alladin and His Wonderful Lamp.*

THE OLDEST SOVIET ACTOR

Yuri Yuriev, outstanding Soviet actor, recently celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday. His professional career began fifty-five years ago when he made his first appearance in Ibsen's *Titans of the North,* on the stage of the Maly Theatre in Moscow. That was in 1892, and the following season saw him at the Alexandrinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) where he has been acting ever since. During the half century he has devoted to the stage, Yuriev has created a whole gallery of characters. He is an ardent advocate of the Russian classical play, and a proponent of the mass theatre. His two books, *Notes* and *Talks by an Actor* are widely read. Yuriev's reminiscences open with an incident from the biography of Vassili Dalmatov, the well-known St. Petersburg actor.

"Why do you want to know how old I am?" Dalmatov used to say laughing. "What do years matter? There is youth and there is old age—years mean nothing."

These words might well apply to Yuriev himself, for he has preserved to an advanced age the youthful vigour of his artistic temperament.

Yuri Yuriev

CINEMA

SOVIET ESTHONIA

The landscape peculiar to the picturesque coastline of Esthonia mingles in this travelogue with cities and factories, villages and fields. We see the industrious Esthonian people, whose historical destiny is so closely bound up with that of the Russians, in a variety of shots showing them at work and at play.

The first post-war spring in Soviet Esthonia. Tallinn, the capital of the republic. The town is alive with sunshine, flowers and children. The ashes and ruins give way to new towns; new workers' settlements arise throughout the land.

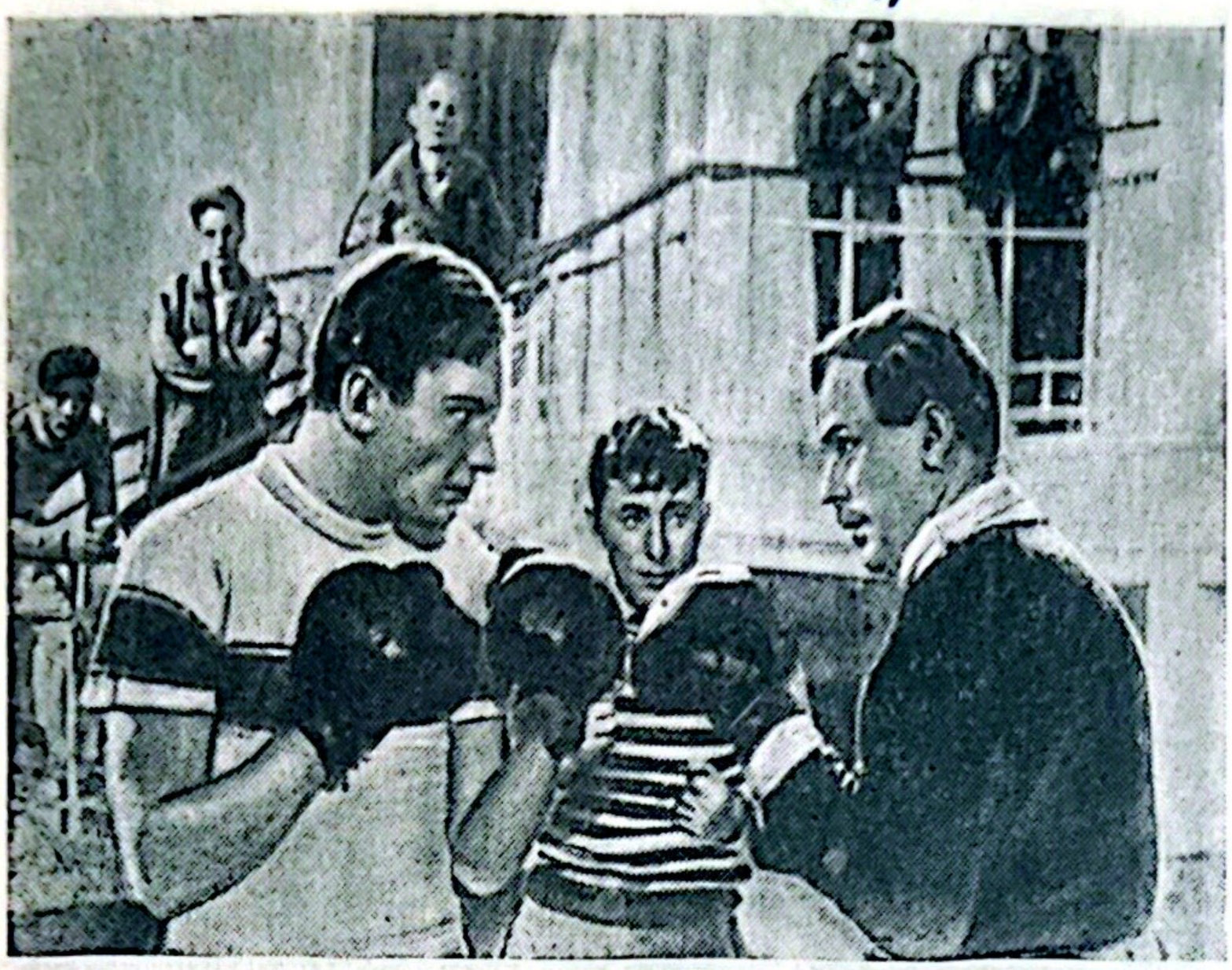
Deep are the wounds inflicted on Esthonia by the German invaders. What a tragic spectacle, the ruins of Narva; the idle, dead buildings of the famous Krenholm factory. But now, the scaffolding is alive with bricklayers—the machines are whirring in the weaving shop restored by the workers themselves.

The whole country is helping this Baltic republic; coal, machinery, fertilizers for the fields are flowing in from all parts of the U.S.S.R. The output of shale is approaching pre-war figures.

Things are humming in the fields. Soviet power has given the Esthonian peasants land and is supplying them with harvesting machinery.

The new film *Soviet Esthonia* gives a truthful picture of the activities of the Esthonian people, as masters of the new life blossoming out in the friendly family of the Soviet republics.

Still from the film Soviet Esthonia



Still from the film The First Glove

THE FIRST GLOVE

A stadium flooded with sunlight. Girl gymnasts in white gym suits doing a calesthenics. Boxers marching preliminary to their training to the sounds of lively music.

These are the opening shots of a new sporting film *The First Glove*. The story is a very simple one. One of the trainers of the *Meteor* Sports Club, walking through the park, meets a certain Lieutenant Nikita Krutikov, just demobbed, a man of extraordinary physical strength. This giant, seeing what he can do on a "Try Your Strength" machine smashes the apparatus. The trainer is delighted and insists that Krutikov join the *Meteor* club. But another trainer, belonging to another society, the *Motor*, turns a covetous eye on Krutikov, too. The situation is saved by a pretty girl, who has caught the strong man's fancy. She turns out to be the gym teacher in the *Meteor* club. That settles the question as far as Krutikov is concerned.

Quite unexpectedly he meets the director of a Siberian state farm where he had worked before the war. The director does all he can to get him to return to his old job. The trainer is alarmed—he may be losing a first class boxer. He must wrest the future champion from the clutches of the taiga, that's clear. It's a duel between trainer and farm director. A number of amusing incidents ensue, and the trainer wins. Nikita Krutikov stays in Moscow and wins the championship!

The main role in the film is played by Ivan Pereverzev. To play the part he had to take a thorough training course in boxing. For three months he trained under Vladimir Mikhailov, one of the outstanding Soviet boxers.

The heroine is played by nineteen-year-old Nadezhda Cherednichenko, a student of the Institute of Cinematography. The producer is a young regisseur, Andrei Frolov; in fact this is his first film. Cameraman Fyodor Firsov, too, is making his debut in *The First Glove*. Beside these young people we see some of our old friends, Anastasya Zuyeva of the Art Theatre, and Vladimir Volodin, an actor of the Moscow Operetta Theatre, who gives a fine performance as a trainer.

The picture of Moscow sports centres, the Dynamo stadium, the Khimki river club, and the shots of the Physical Culture Parade in Moscow are excellent.

BULGARIA

The opening shots of the new documental film, *Bulgaria* form the epigraph, as it were, to this cinema story of the country. The picturesque Bulgarian scenery flashes on to the screen: the sea and the age-old pine trees, the snow-capped mountains and rose gardens. Against the background of these landscapes is revealed the character of Bulga-

Still from the film Bulgaria

ria's people—industrious, unassuming, honest and manly.

Bulgaria had long been under the power of German imperialism. On the threshold of World War II the traitors to the Bulgarian people signed the pact delivering Bulgaria to the axis countries. Traces of the "New Order" in Bulgaria can be seen in this film: the bodies of men and women done to death, shot or hanged in the streets of Sofia. . .

The best people in the country remained faithful to the fraternity of the Slavs. A lasting memorial to this friendship is a monument towering above the snowy heights of Shipka, where in the year 1877 Russian soldiers fought side by side with the Bulgarian army in the battles for the liberation of Bulgaria from the Turkish yoke.

In the struggle with Hitlerism the strength of this friendship was displayed anew: the volleys of guerrilla rifles blending with the roar of Soviet guns in the mountains of Bulgaria.

The Soviet Army is coming up to the frontier. The general strike grows into a popular rising. The guerrillas are descending from the mountains, a sea of faces in the squares of liberated Sofia. The camera's eye is making a tour through this land that has shaken off the yoke of foreign oppression. The Danube is returning to life; at Varna, ships carrying cotton are unloaded, textile mills are reviving, dams are under construction. The harvest is being gathered in; the doors of public reading rooms are opened; moustached tillers of the soil are peacefully talking things over. The great hall of the People's Assembly is filled to overflowing. This is an historical day: Bulgaria has become a republic! . . Wine is frothing on village tables—there is dancing in town and country; in the streets and the public squares.

THE HEART OF THE HOMELAND

Moscow this year will celebrate its eight hundredth anniversary and to this imposing event the new historico-geographical film, *The Heart of the Homeland*, is devoted.

The screen shows us a high hill and a stronghold, the first, surrounded by a wooden palisade. It is 1147, the year marking the first mention of Moscow in ancient chronicles. Centuries pass. Here is a map showing the arteries of roads and waterways connecting Moscow with other Russian towns. Moscow is gaining in importance; it grows into the centre of the Moscow Principality and later, of the Russian State.

Monuments of ancient architecture tell their own story of the history of the capital. The Moscow Kremlin. A fortress of stone with imposing walls and towers. The Armoury, the ancient cathedrals, living relics of the country's past. Around the Kremlin following a concentric radial plan, the walls of Kitai-Gorod, then of Bely Gorod arise, the lines of the Moscow streets diverging more and more widely from the centre.

The year 1612 brought a glorious page to Russian history. The people's army led by Kuzma Minin and Dmitri Pozharsky, drives the foreign interventionists out of Moscow, 1812. . . Moscow fighting against the hordes of Napoleon, the city ablaze. The flames of the Moscow conflagration merged into the flame of a popular war. The remnants of Napoleon's army are seen fleeing from Moscow, from Russia.

Through the barricades of 1905 to the Great October Socialist Revolution. The year 1917, street fighting and the triumph of the people's cause.

Moscow, the capital of the Socialist State. The red flag waving over the Kremlin. Included in the film are excerpts from old newsreels showing Lenin speaking to the people. Lenin's study in the Kremlin, vast masses of people taking their last leave of the dead leader on a frosty day in January, 1924.

Without Lenin—along the Lenin road. The appearance of the Soviet capital has changed. The year 1935 saw the publication of Stalin's General Plan for the Reconstruction of Moscow. Where once small ramshackle houses had stood on the outskirts of the city, now broad new streets were laid and tall buildings went up. New parks and squares have appeared. Day and night constructive labour forged ahead in the giant factories of the capital. The Volga waters were brought up to the walls of the Kremlin; the new Moscow-Volga Canal cuts across the map of the country. . . Metro stations were faced with granite and marble, new theatre buildings, well-lighted spacious schools, parks, and stadiums went up.

Moscow is the cultural centre of the U.S.S.R. Over ten million books are housed in the repositories of the Lenin Library, the Tretyakov Gallery has thirty-three thousand pictures, drawings and sculptures; the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. has its headquarters in Moscow; there are hundreds of schools of higher learning and institutes with a student body a hundred thousand strong. Moscow is a city of theatres and of music; it has the best playhouses in the country—the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre, the Art Theatre, the Maly Theatre, Conservatory and numerous concert halls.

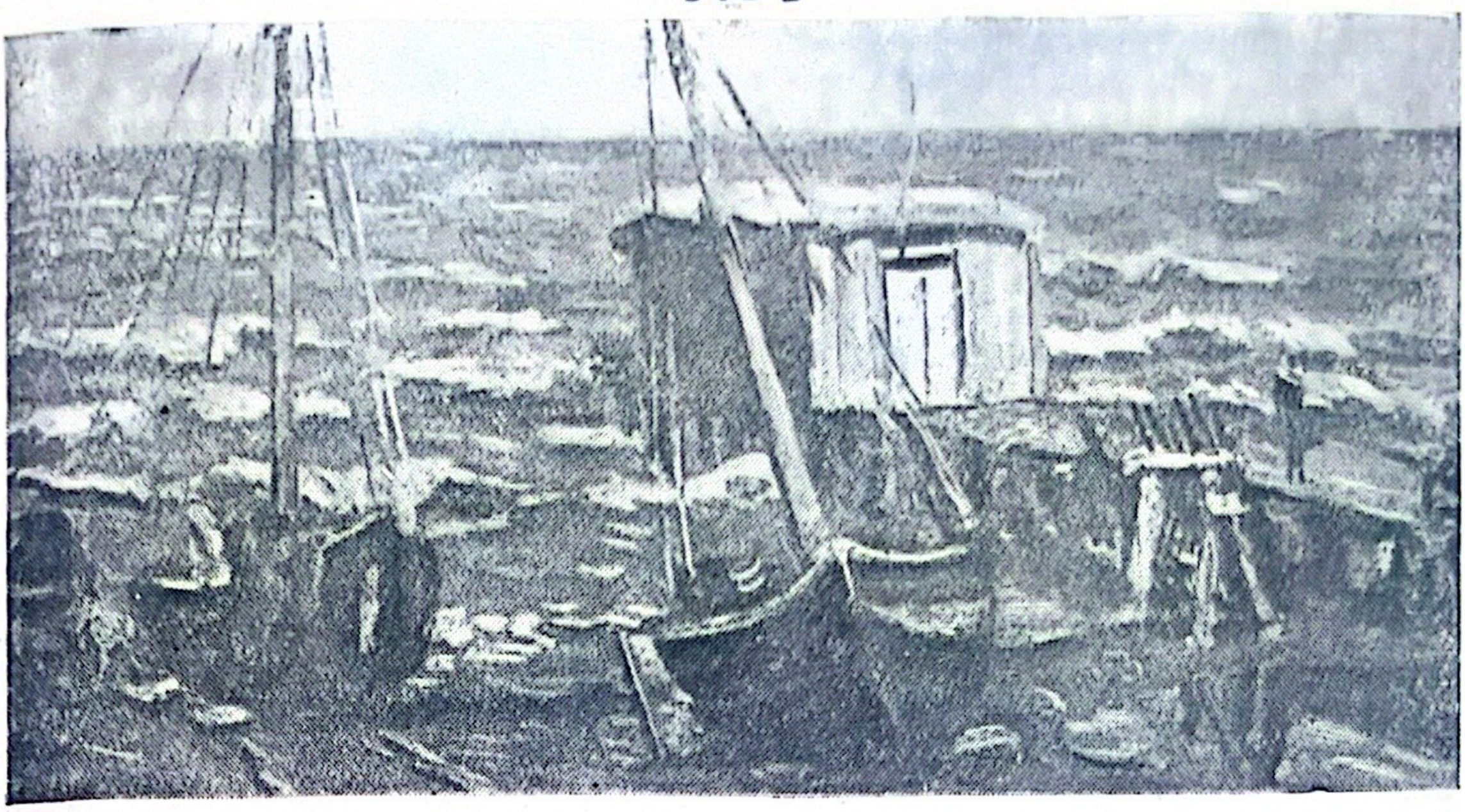
Joseph Stalin lives and works in Moscow. We see Stalin in the days of peaceful labour, and in the grim days of war. An unforgettable occasion is Stalin's speech on November 6, 1941—his report on the twenty-fourth anniversary of the October Revolution. The enemy was pressing on the capital. Moscow had become a front-line town, but the leader's voice was calm and assured, inspiring in the hearts of the millions confidence in the final triumph of a righteous cause.

And victory did come to the Soviet people! Columns of captive Hitlerites are passing along the streets of Moscow.

A R T S

A TWO-MAN ART SHOW

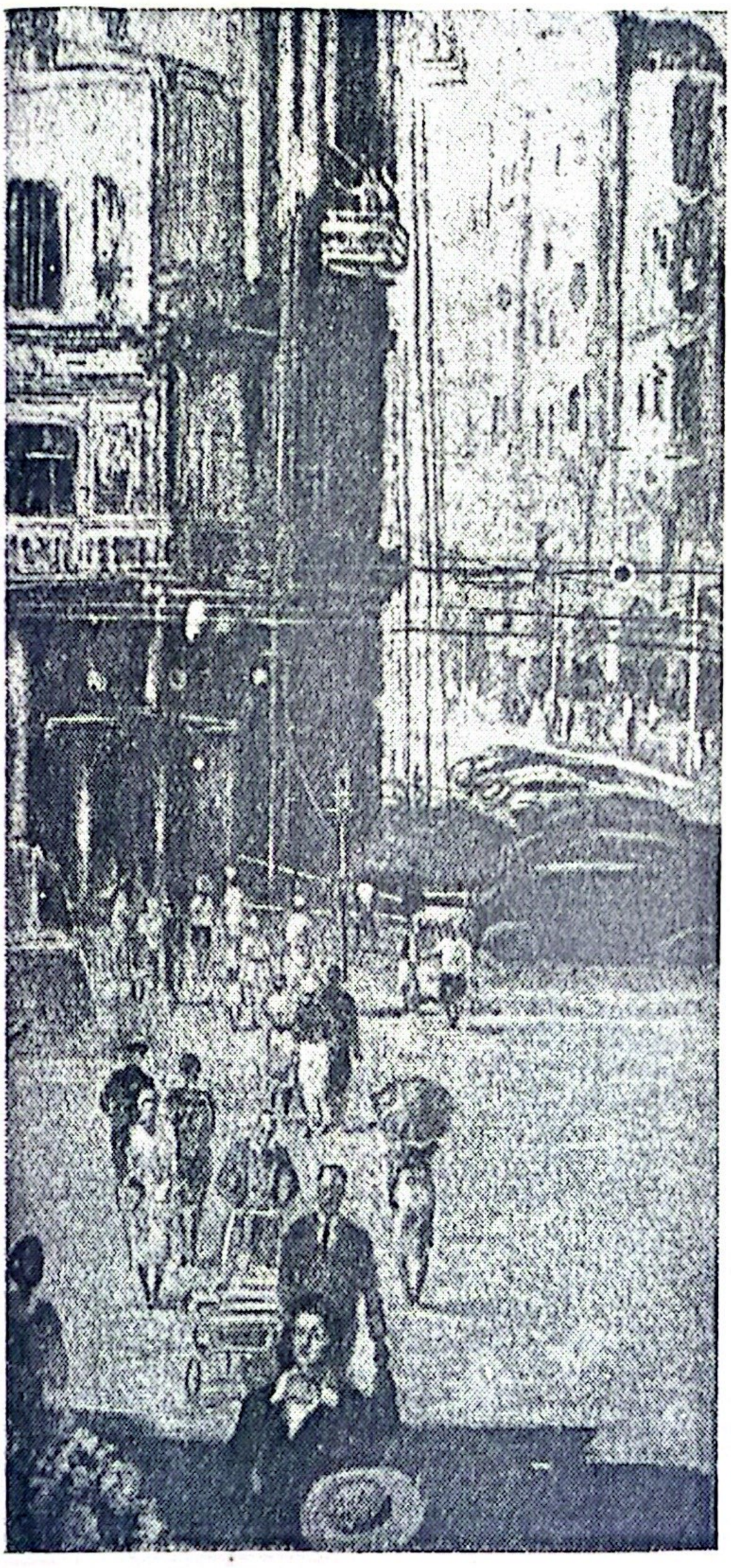
In the hall of the exhibition, two painters have met—different in style and manner, but with a common interest in contemporary themes.



The Barges. *By V. Odintsov.*

Yuri Pimenov has a predilection for the small genre picture—the story recorded by the brush. He is the painter of every-day life; the painter of Moscow, where he was born, and grew to manhood. Most of his canvases chronicle the life of the capital. He gives faithful pictures of front-line Moscow; the snow-drifted streets bristling with tank obstacles—"hedgehogs" as they were called in grim humour, the dark night sky rent by searchlights; women with children descending into shelters. The artist takes us into the outskirts of the city; in the squares and boulevards we see women and children planting potatoes—allotments and kitchen gardens stretch far out into the distance.

Soviet woman is the main character in Pimenov's paintings. He paints a girl chauffeur driving her car along front-line roads; women fearlessly keeping watch on the house tops during enemy raids; the lone figure of a woman following her plough along a wide stretch of fields in spring.



The City. *By Y. Pimenov*

The second artist represented in this exhibition is Vladimir Odintsov whose forte lies in monumental subjects, large and complex compositions. Visitors to the Agricultural Exhibition of 1939 will remember his great panneau *Distinguished Visitors at the Collective Farm.*

Illustrative of Odintsov's manner is *The Komsomol Boat* (1940-1946). On the open sea, in sun and wind, people are hard at work on a fishing boat. One sees sunburnt faces, muscular arms, and the glinting scales of the fish. Odintsov made this painting on the Caspian Sea; all the sketches, the seascapes, fishing boats and characters were done on the spot.

Many of his paintings mirror the moving themes of war. He paints Soviet Army girls standing on the platform just before their train pulls out. One last glance at the familiar station, at the faces of near and dear ones whom they are leaving. They are going into danger, but the girls' faces are not marred by a shadow of fear or despondency.

At present Odintsov is engaged on a monumental canvas: *At Close Quarters.* The subject is the difficult one of a hand-to-hand skirmish. Etudes for the future canvas, on view in this exhibition, indicate that the artist

has successfully coped with the problem of dynamic composition.

The contrasts of tastes, styles, and manner in the art of Y. Pimenov and of V. Odintsov are clear evidence of the diversity of realistic tendencies prevailing in modern Soviet painting.

LINA PO EXHIBITION

Lina Po's sculptures were first exhibited in 1936, when they attracted general attention, mainly because the sculptress who had modelled the tiny, dainty figures in *Dance Suite* was blind.

During the years of stubborn and successful work that have elapsed since that first show, Lina Po has developed into an artist to be reckoned with.

The majority of her works recently exhibited in Moscow (there were sixty-four in all) are not large in size. In the last war and post-war years she has been doing portraits in life size. Throughout the different themes of her sculptures there can be detected the common endeavour to catch the mimicry of the human body and express mental attitudes in the language of plastics.

Her favourite theme is the dance (before her infirmity the sculptor was a professional dancer), and the present exhibition makes it possible to follow the development of that theme through successive stages in the sculptor's art. One of her earliest pieces is the *Shawl Dance*. Balanced on one toe, the ballerina holds in her wide-flung arms a shawl which hangs in stately, rhythmic folds.

Another sculpture on display consists of a whole group of figures—*Dance Suite*, modelled in plastelline. The central figure seems frozen in a classical dance pose, the remaining seven dancing around her.

The theme of dancing is developed in several of Lina Po's other works, the best of which are *Spanish Dance*, *Negro Dance*, and *Hopak* (Ukrainian)—all of which skillfully solve the problem of space.

In *Jumping* presenting the figure of a girl athlete suspended in mid air, there is superb feeling of movement, and soaring upward flight.

Grief, *Weeping Girl* and *Elegy*, all three done at different periods in her career, form a series devoted to the theme of human grief.

Concentrated thought is expressed in the portraits which form an important part of Lina Po's art. Among them we have portraits of Pushkin, Chekhov, Paganini and a series of children's heads.

It is interesting that before producing her sculpture of Pushkin, the blind artist for a whole year studied the plaster death mask of the poet, guided only by her sense of touch.

In the war years Lina Po contributed generously to the war effort of the Soviet people against German fascism. She created her *Woman With a Number*, an image of a Russian woman, languishing in fascist captivity. Her *Homeless*, a group of a mother and child sorrowfully wandering in search of refuge through a devastated land, breathes of wrath and bitterness.

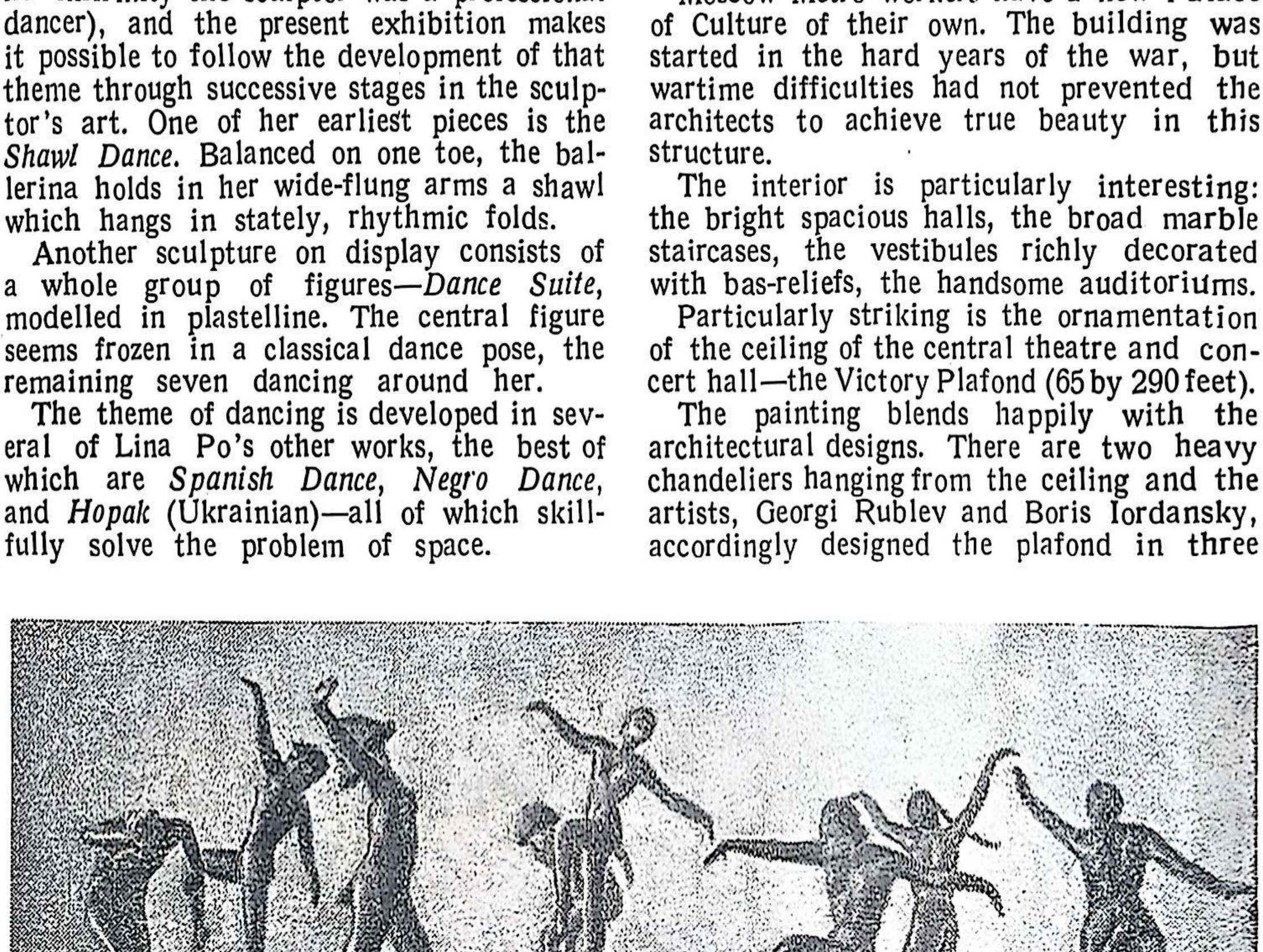
THE VICTORY PLAFOND

Moscow Metro workers have a new Palace of Culture of their own. The building was started in the hard years of the war, but wartime difficulties had not prevented the architects to achieve true beauty in this structure.

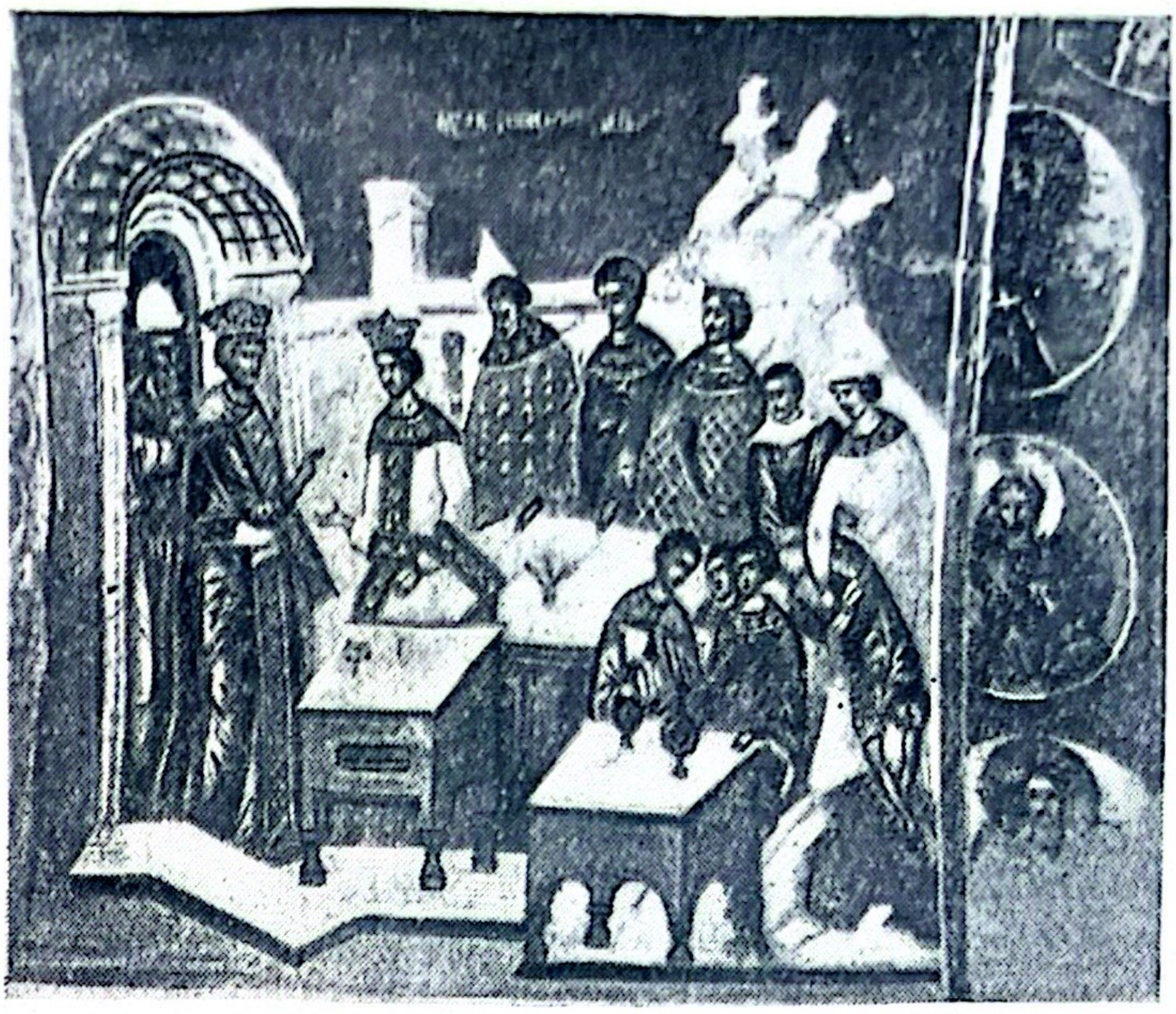
The interior is particularly interesting: the bright spacious halls, the broad marble staircases, the vestibules richly decorated with bas-reliefs, the handsome auditoriums.

Particularly striking is the ornamentation of the ceiling of the central theatre and concert hall—the Victory Plafond (65 by 290 feet).

The painting blends happily with the architectural designs. There are two heavy chandeliers hanging from the ceiling and the artists, Georgi Rublev and Boris Iordansky, accordingly designed the plafond in three



Dance Suite. *By Lina Po*



Fresco by Dionisi at the Ferapontov Monastery

sections. The colour scheme is to some extent influenced by the white marble of the walls and the red upholstery of the seats in the hall.

The artists have produced a composition that is highly original; they have painted a joyous, imposing picture of the country hailing the victorious Soviet Army.

The human figures in the plafond are life size. Towering above them are the Kremlin, the monument to the Russian national heroes Minin and Pozharsky in the Red Square; Vera Mukhina's sculpture of *Worker and Woman-Collective Farmer* and a great triumphal arch. They are the compositional centres symbolizing that the conquering warriors are acclaimed not only by the Soviet people, but by all their heroic past.

The landscape motifs form an important element enriching the decorative impression of the whole, and giving the effect of the rain-washed and sunlit meadows and glades of the Russian land together with the rejoicing people welcoming back their sons.

Another important problem in plafond decoration, that of space proportion, has been skillfully handled. The groups of figures, mainly arranged towards the edges of the plafond, are in full view thanks to a system of alternating free and filled spaces in the design.

The lighting effects are particularly good, a sheaf of rays rising from behind one of the Kremlin towers illumining the entire plafond.

THE FRESCOES OF DIONISI

For a number of years a group from the scientific staff of the Institute of the History of Art under the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. have been investigating the treasures of the Ferapontov Monastery, one of the most remarkable monuments of ancient Russian art. A quantity of valuable material bearing on the history of the monastery and the adjoining buildings has been collected. Perhaps the most valuable is the research pertaining to the hitherto little-known frescoes of the Cathedral of the Nativity painted by the great Russian master, Dionisi.

The name of Dionisi was known to all Russia in the 15th century. We learn from ancient chronicles that he worked on the orders of Tsar Ivan III at the Cathedral of the Assumption in Moscow, as well as in a number of monasteries around the city. Not one of his paintings has come down to our own times, and it is only at Ferapontov that an authentic work of the great master has been preserved.

An inscription over the north entrance indicates that the work was done between the years 1500 and 1502; Dionisi must have been over sixty at the time. The old painter was not able to cope with the task alone and was helped by two of his sons and his apprentices.

Dionisi was responsible for the ornamentation of the portal and for the lower frescoes and there can be little doubt that the general conception of the design was also his.

The dominant note of the church is the glorification of the Virgin. The figure is repeatedly depicted on columns, walls, and arches, and beautifully silhouetted against a background of blue or amber gold.

Along the curves of the principal arches are round medallions coloured in light tones, bearing the figures of saints. They are in the nature of ornament and stress the joyful jubilant impression of the Cathedral's painted designs. In the main altar is placed a huge Virgin and Child. The face of the mother, clear and calm, is reminiscent in spite of the icon treatment of the calmness, strength and tenderness that are typical of the Russian woman.

Dionisi's portrayals of the Oecumenical Councils at Constantinople, where controversies on questions of faith were held, have been imbued by the old master with poignant dramatism and topical importance, being undoubtedly echoes of the dissensions with the Novgorod heretics—then a question of political importance which at the time arous-

ed considerable excitement among the people of Russia.

The rich and harmoniously coloured paintings in the Cathedral of the Nativity mirror poignant questions in the life of Russia towards the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th centuries.

A special section headed *Art Heritage*, in a volume being published by the Institute of the History of Art, will deal with the results of researches made in the Feraspontov Monastery.

NEW FINE ARTS PUBLISHING HOUSE

A publishing house to deal especially with questions relating to the fine arts has been opened under the Moscow State Museum for Fine Arts.

Some excellent reproductions have already been issued of the museum's own paintings by Rembrandt, Rubens, Jordaens, Corot, D'Aubigny, Diaz and other masters. A special series of reproductions is devoted to the history of world sculpture, illustrated by specimens preserved in Soviet and West-European museums. Two reproductions of portraits of the great Russian general, Mikhail Kutuzov, are exceedingly interesting. One is Henry Daw's engraving from the portrait by George Daw, and the other, an engraving by Godby, from a portrait by Volkov.

In 1946, reproductions were published of the best pictures, statues and engravings shown at the U.S.S.R. Art Exhibition of that year.

The 1947 publishing plan includes reproductions of 250 outstanding monuments of world art preserved in the collections of the Soviet Union. Several large albums on the history of art are being published—one, in nine parts, is a history of monumental sculpture; another is devoted to the masterpieces in the Pushkin Museum; a third contains selected etchings by the famous English artist, Frank Brangwyn and two albums will be published with the respective titles of *Selected Pieces of Russian Engraving* and *Moscow in Russian Engravings.*

Research in the history of art and art criticism receives special attention, books in this field already published include Professor B. R. Vipper's *English Art*, a short historical outline; V. N. Volskaya's essay on *Poussin*, and *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia*, by I. Loseva. Several large monographs are soon to appear: *Spanish Painting of the 16th-17th Centuries* by K. M. Malitskaya; *Chardin*, by V. N. Lazarev; *Essays on the History of Flemish Painting* by N. M. Gershenson; *English Engraving of the 18th Century*, by I. A. Kuznetsova; *The Art of India*, by S. I. Tuliayev. A volume has been completed by the museum's scientific staff entitled *Works of the Museum.*

Another new departure in literature on art is the publication of a museum bulletin entitled *Monuments of Art*, where current events in Soviet and international museum life are to be listed and described.

THE CENTENARIES

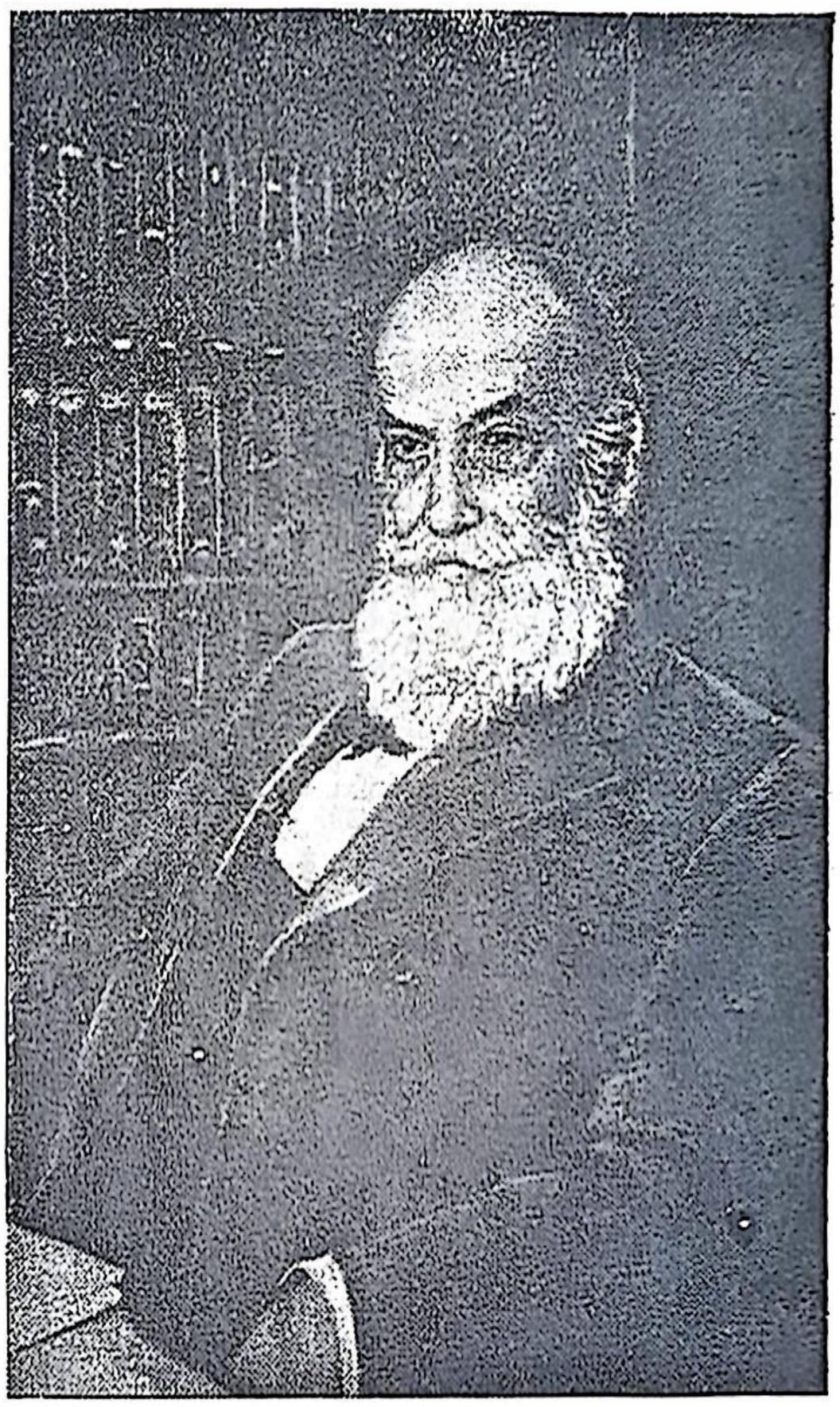
The beginning of 1947 marked the hundredth anniversaries of the birth of two outstanding Russians who have written brilliant pages in the history of progressive science.

The Father of Russian Aviation

In a decree published in the lifetime of Professor Nikolai Zhukovsky, Lenin called him the "Father of Russian Aviation."

The President of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., Sergei Vavilov, says of Zhukovsky's scientific activities:

"The profundity and importance of Zhukovsky's contribution to science has been revealed to its full extent concurrently with the rapid development of technology, and, particularly, of aviation. In a few decades aviation has traversed the triumphal road from its modest early efforts to its present status. The foundations of the science are based on the experimental and theoretical findings of aerodynamics of Zhukovsky, his associates and disciples.



"Zhukovsky was the living embodiment of the progressive man in a science which in the words of Stalin 'does not isolate itself from the people, does not stand aloof from the people, but is ready to serve the people.' Zhukovsky has left the Soviet Union a precious heritage which has helped to consolidate its might."

The Oldest Russian Geologist

For half a century, Alexander Karpinsky was a member of the Academy of Sciences

and for twenty years (from 1916 to 1936) its president.

Karpinsky devoted his whole lifetime, his profound experience and erudition to studying the geology of Russia. He was the teacher of a great number of prominent scientists. The author of some three hundred scientific publications, many of which are recognized as standard works, Karpinsky's theoretical researches invariably led to important practical results. It was under his direction that the famous Bakhmut rock-salt mines and the new coal beds on the eastern slope of the Urals were discovered. He predicted, also, the discovery of oil in the Urals, and gave an exhaustive analysis of the geological structure of the Urals and of the distribution of useful minerals concealed in the depths of its mountains.

Karpinsky was Honorary Member or Corresponding Member of the Academies of Sciences of Rome, Bologna, Brussels, Goettingen and Philadelphia.

In commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of the great scientist's birth, a gold medal and a prize of twenty-five thousand rubles bearing his name have been instituted by the government, to be awarded by the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. annually from 1947 on, for outstanding works in geology. In January of this year the prize was adjudged to Academician V. Obruchev.

CONTEST OF FOLKLORE COLLECTORS

An interesting competition for collectors of folklore has just been sponsored by the Central Popular Art House. Over ten thousand entries were submitted to the judges by amateur collectors of different professions—teachers, librarians, agronomists, physicians and students. The extensive work of collecting old and interesting specimens of folklore was carried on in Russian villages, Ukrainian hamlets, mountain auls, Cossack stanitsas, Siberian settlements and yurtas in the remote steppes.

The first prize went to F. Tumilevich, an instructor at the Rostov University, for written records of the rich folklore of the Cossacks of the Krasnodon Region, and to V. Vinogradov, folk music connoisseur, for records of Kirghiz folk music. The seventy-four records he submitted are a monographic study of the songs of the famous Kirghiz akyn (bard) Aaly Toktogul, taken down from the performances of his pupils.

Second prizes were awarded to a group of students of the Minsk University who collected one hundred and eighty Belorussian songs and popular verses relating to the war period; and to B. Golovachev and V. Loshchilin for their interesting specimens of folk theatre plays of the beginning of the 20th century.

WOMAN CHESS CHAMPION OF U.S.S.R.

The seventeen best women chess players in the country took part in the 9th U.S.S.R. Tournament for Women.

The first prize and title of Woman Champion of U.S.S.R. were won by Elizaveta Bykova who made 14 out of 16 possible points, leaving behind her V. Belova and L. Rudenko, both winners in the recent radio match U.S.S.R. versus England. The new champion E. Bykova, is a Moscovite, and an engineer economist by profession. She has been playing in chess matches since 1937, and has won the Moscow Championship for women four times.

THE FIRST RUSSIAN NEWSPAPER

Two hundred and forty-four years ago the first number of Russia's first printed newspaper came out in Moscow.

There had, it is true, existed long before that date (from the year 1621), the handwritten *Vesti* (News) and *Kuranty* (Chimes), but they were leaflets intended only for the tsar, and a limited circle of his intimates. "Read aloud to the Great Tsar in his apartment, the boyars listening in the antechamber," runs an ancient record of one of these readings.

The printed *Vedomosti* (Annals), was initiated by an Ukase of the Emperor Peter the Great, the first number appearing on January 13, 1703. The tsar took an active interest in the paper, himself editing the first number and continuing to contribute material. Some issues bearing proof corrections done by Peter's own hand have been preserved. The language of *Vedomosti* is the every-day colloquial tongue of the time.

Russia's first newspaper wrote about the life of the country, the advance of culture, economic achievements. Here are a few brief extracts from the first number of *Vedomosti*:

". . . Moscow schools are multiplying. Forty-five men are attending classes in philosophy and have already finished with dialectics.

". . . In the mathematical school for navigators over three hundred persons are learning and acquiring knowledge in good manner."

. . . The news from Kazan runs that "much oil and copper ore have been found on the River Soku; from the ore, copper was smelted in large quantities, great profits being expected therefrom for the state of Muscovy. . . ."

The original circulation of the paper did not exceed one thousand copies, but its appearance was so timely, meeting as it did the growing appetite for knowledge and culture, that many of its numbers were copied by hand and spread among eager circles of readers. Many such handwritten copies have been preserved to the present day.

A VALUABLE GIFT

E. N. Belikov of Kharkov, an old-age pensioner who died recently, shortly before his death handed over gratis to the local Museum of History and Geography his collection of 1315 rare coins.

Belikov had devoted half a century to numismatics. When his collection came to be examined many specimens of exceptional value were brought to light: Grivny (ten-kopek pieces of Kiev Russia); coins dating from the epoch of the first great Princes of Muscovy; copper kopeks of the years of Boris Godunov; rubles of the period of False Dmitri and a complete set of coins minted under Peter the Great.

The collection presented to the museum is valued at approximately one million rubles.

VIIth SESSION OF ACADEMY OF ARCHITECTURE

The Academy of Architecture of the U.S.S.R. founded in 1934, has, despite the vicissitudes of the four war years, grown into the country's largest institute of research on questions of architecture and town building. The special institutes affiliated to the Academy have a total staff amounting to nearly one thousand.

The Academy's first post-war session held at Moscow in the autumn of 1946, was devoted mainly to its five-year plan of work for the years 1946 to 1950.

The post-war five-year plan for the reconstruction and development of the national economy provides for extensive building of industrial enterprises, domestic, cultural and public buildings. It is in conformity with this program that the five-year plan for the development of architectural science was drafted.

Among those who read papers at the session were: the president of the Academy, Academician Victor Vesnin, members of the Academy Karo Alabyan, Nikolai Kolli, corresponding members David Arkin, Nikolai Brunov and Nikolai Bylinkin.

One of the most important themes in the Academy's plan is: *The Basic Principles of Soviet Town Planning*, the work to include problems of architectural composition, public health, residential facilities and economy in building and maintenance.

Besides the architects, there are engineers, physicians, economists, climatologists, etc., working on these problems.

Several other problems of town planning are closely connected with the basic theme, viz: *The National Traditions in Russian Town Planning, The History of Town Planning*, etc.

In connection with the large-scale building of homes scheduled in the five-year plan, the following themes now being elaborated acquire particular importance: *The Designing of Many-Storied Industrialized Buildings* and *Principles in Designing Dwelling Houses.*

Among the themes relative to the architecture of public buildings are: *Communal Centres in Towns*, and several works dealing with the designing of industrial schools, theatres, and so on.

Extensive studies are also scheduled bearing on the theory and history of architecture, among them: *The Theory of Architectural Composition; Problem of Socialist Realism in Architecture; Problem of the Lenin-Stalin Doctrine of the Cultural Heritage As Applied to Architecture;* a three-volume *History of Russian Architecture*, as well as a series of works on the history of the architecture of the peoples of the U.S.S.R.—those of Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and others.

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